

*The Commerce of Literature: George Gissing and Late Victorian Publishing, 1880-1903*

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## Summary

### *The Commerce of Literature: George Gissing and Late Victorian Publishing, 1880-1903*

examines the economic and commercial background of late Victorian publishing and the changing commercial environment for authors. George Gissing (1857-1903) is best known today for his 1891 novel *New Grub Street*, the quintessential novel of authorship and publishing in the nineteenth century. The records, copyright ledgers, and contracts of Gissing's major publishers demonstrate how the complexity of publishing after 1880, particularly the growth of an international market, required professional assistance from literary agents to secure the rights and rewards that authors were increasingly demanding. Contracts also underwent a transformation, and Gissing's provide examples of how they were changed by new markets and the rise of the agent. Serialization of novels in popular and literary magazines and the publication of short stories were also important outlets in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gissing's letters, diary, and his records of payments show how important such activity could be for a late-nineteenth century novelist.

In 1894 the dominance of the three-volume novel ended when the circulating libraries refused to accept them. The three-volume format was and still is defended on the grounds that it was almost always profitable for publishers and encouraged them to take risks on new novels. This thesis uses an examination of publishers' accounts to show that the format only made money if the copyright payments were kept below £150 and the majority of the edition was sold. Many new novelists, such as Gissing, only saw their way into print if they agreed to subsidize their first novel.

An esteemed but never a popular novelist, Gissing's literary earnings were still within a middle-class income range and demonstrated that the newly developed profession of authorship was increasingly viable.

## Acknowledgements

There has been a long and circuitous route to the beginning and completion of this thesis and many people to thank for steering me to it. First thanks goes to Franlee Frank, my mentor as an apprentice bookseller, who gave me copy of that classic of bookselling, Christopher Morley's *The Haunted Bookshop* (Doubleday, 1919). Looking for more books by Morley I went to the Gotham Bookshop in New York where Alfred M. Slotnick (1916-1980) told me that if I read Morley I had to read Gissing to understand why the Haunted Bookshop was situated on Gissing Street. I left with *The Odd Women* and soon found myself going back to the Gotham for more Gissing novels and then biographies and critical works, not only on Gissing but also on Victorian publishing in general. I did not know then that Al Slotnick was a leading Gissing bibliographer and responsible for assembling much of the outstanding Gissing collection now owned by Pierre Coustillas. I had, of course read several of Coustillas' works on Gissing and wrote to him before beginning this thesis. He was and has been very encouraging and supportive and it has been an honour to work with him in Gissing matters. Another Gissing collector and scholar, Professor John Spiers, has also been of great assistance in providing references and encouragement. I spent much time at the National Library of Scotland and found the collections and staff very helpful. I am also grateful to several colleagues from Edinburgh who do research in George Gissing or on his publishers and who have been helpful in supplying leads and encouragement: Professor David Finkelstein, Professor of Media and Print Culture, Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh; Dr Bill Bell, Senior Lecturer, University of Edinburgh; and Dr Jonathan Wild, Lecturer, University of Edinburgh. I have also benefited from discussing the topic with Professor Simon Eliot, Chair in the History of the Book, Institute of English Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London and in

discussing the three-volume novel with Dr. John Sutherland, emeritus Lord Northcliffe professor of modern English literature at University College London.

The Smith, Elder materials used for this thesis were housed in the archives of the publishing house of John Murray and I am very grateful to the Archivist, Virginia Murray, for allowing me access to them and for locating Gissing letters and contracts that had previously been undiscovered.

I must also thank the librarians and archivists at the Lilly Library at Indiana University, and my colleagues at the Research Libraries of the New York Public Library and its Berg Collection.

At the University of Wales I must certainly thank my advisor for all these years, Dr. Chris Baggs, for his patience, his sound advice, and his close reading of all these chapters and tables. Mr. Gwilym Huws, who was Head of the Department of Information Studies when I began this thesis encouraged me to have every chapter presented as a paper or publication and I think having the thesis vetted by outside audiences not only helped me in writing it but also brought me into contact with the wider network of book historians and Gissing scholars.

I would also like to thank Dr. Christine Urquhart, Director of Research at Aberystwyth for her advice and assistance in the registration and documentation and other details of student life that can be difficult to follow from half a world away. And finally, of course, I benefited most from the encouragement and the fine editorial hand of my wife, Dr Maureen Buja and this work is dedicated to her.

A version of chapter 2, 'Smith, Elder & Co. and the Realities of New Grub Street' was read at the twenty-first annual British Book Trade History Conference, Edinburgh, July 2004, under the title 'Smith, Elder & Co. and the Realities of New Grub Street'. It was subsequently published under that title as a chapter in John Hinks

and Catherine Armstrong (Eds.), *Worlds of Print: Diversity in the Book Trade* (London: The British Library and Oak Knoll Books, 2006), as part of the Print Networks series.

A version of the section on *Thyrza* from Chapter 2 was published in the *Gissing Journal* 40.1 (2004) under the title ‘The *Thyrza* Contract and Two Unpublished Letters’.

Chapter 3, ‘The Age of the Middleman: George Gissing and His Literary Agents’ was read under the title ‘The Commerce of Literature: George Gissing and His Literary Agents’ at the *City of Literature: The Rise of the Literary Profession in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Edinburgh University School of Literatures, Languages, and Cultures, 4 June 2005.

Material from this thesis was used in preparing for a panel convened by the author titled ‘Gissing Abroad and Gissing in Libraries’ at the twelfth annual conference of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP), Lyon, France, July 20-July 24 2004. Panel members were Chris Baggs, University of Wales, Aberystwyth and Pierre Coustillas, University of Lille. My paper was later published as “George Gissing, International Copyright and Late Victorian Publishing” *The Gissing Journal* 40.4 (2004).

Chapter 5, ‘Economics of the “Triple-headed Monster”’ was presented as “The Myth of the Triple-Header Monster: The Economics of the Three-volume Novel” at *The Birth of the Bestseller* conference, Bibliographical Society of America, New York, 29-31 March 2007 and has been accepted for publication in *Publishing History*. The discoveries related to hidden profits made by George Bentley on *The Emancipated* described in Chapter 7 will also be forthcoming as “Bentley’s Emancipated Profit” in the *Gissing Journal*.

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## Introduction

“The facts connected with the production and distribution of books, though little heeded by the public are, nevertheless, of great social and political, as well as literary importance.” So wrote John Chapman in *Cheap Books and How to Get Them*, a book he reprinted from his April 1852 *Westminster Review* article entitled ‘The Commerce of Literature’, appropriated as the title of this thesis.<sup>1</sup> This work will examine that “commerce”: the production, distribution, and economics of literature, and, perhaps most importantly from a human standpoint, the financial rewards of literature to the people who produced it, in relation to the life of one late Victorian author, George Gissing.

George Gissing (1857-1903) is best known today as the author of *New Grub Street*, a novel that concerns itself with the plight of an author of much talent but little success. In *New Grub Street*, the career of the struggling but artistically dedicated author James Reardon is contrasted with that of Jasper Milvain, an author who sees literature as more occupation than art:

... I am the literary man of 1882. Literature nowadays is a trade. Putting aside men of genius, who may succeed by mere cosmic force, your successful man of letters is your skilful tradesman. He thinks first and foremost of the markets; when one kind of goods begins to go off slackly, he is ready with something new and appetising. ...but our Grub Street of to-day is quite a different place: it is

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<sup>1</sup> John Chapman, *Cheap Books and How to Get Them* (London: John Chapman, 1852) 1. Chapman's 'Commerce of Literature' appeared in his own journal, the *Westminster Review*, edited at that time by Marian Evans (George Eliot). Chapman would continue to own and edit it for 43 years, until his death in Paris on 25 November 1894. His bookselling and publishing business never recovered from his battle with the Bookseller's Association and he eventually turned to medicine, selling his struggling publishing business for £900 in 1860 and becoming a member of the Royal College of Surgeons 1861. He carried on a practice in London, treating mentally ill patients and then moved to Paris in 1874 where he continued to edit the *Westminster Review*. Eliot continued writing for the *Westminster Review* until 1857, when her new career as a novelist began to pay. For a biography of Chapman and his relationship with Eliot, see Gordon S Haight, *George Eliot & John Chapman, with Chapman's Diaries*. 1940. 2nd ed.(s.l.: Archon Books, 1969). A new biography of Chapman by Rosemary Ashton, *142 Strand: A Radical Address in Victorian London*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 2006) provides a depth of information on Chapman, his circle, and the *Westminster Review*.

supplied with telegraphic communication, it knows what literary fare is in demand in every part of the world, and its inhabitants are men of business, however seedy.<sup>2</sup>

In many ways autobiographical, *New Grub Street* has remained almost constantly in print since its first issue in three-volume format by Smith, Elder in 1891. Gissing's novel is the quintessential novel of authorship and publishing in the nineteenth century and his own life, well documented in his letters, diaries, and in the archives of his publishers, provides us with a detailed dossier of the economics of late Victorian publishing. This examination of Victorian publishing will come from the vantage point of an author who was respected, if not popular; whose entire living for much of his life came from his pen; and who represents neither the best-seller novelist or the Grub Street hack, but the great mid-range of Victorian novelists. In 1895 the *Chronicle*, recounting a dinner at the Omar Khayyám Club honouring George Meredith, who had been Bentley's manuscript reader and accepted Gissing's *Unclassed* for publication, listed Gissing, Hardy and Meredith as the three best writers of the age.<sup>3</sup> Today, most of Meredith's books are only available from specialist publishers while new editions of Gissing can still be found in bookshops.<sup>4</sup>

Earlier research on the economics of publishing has largely concentrated on the period up to 1870 and on best-selling classic novelists, such as Dickens and Thackeray, who could be considered anomalies in the field and not representative of the majority of working novelists, men and women who earned their living by writing but whose novels became neither best-sellers or classics. Robert L. Patten, in *Charles Dickens & His Publishers*, examined the economics of the novels of Dickens, and Peter L. Shillingsburg examined the relations of Thackeray and his publishers in *Pegasus in Harness: Victorian*

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<sup>2</sup> George Gissing, *New Grub Street* (New York: Modern Library, 1926) 5.

<sup>3</sup> George Gissing, *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1978) 380.

<sup>4</sup> The most recent *New Grub Street*, edited by John Goode, was published in the Oxford World's Classics series in 1993; *The Odd Women* (2000) and *The Nether World* (1999) also appear in that series. *New Grub Street* is also available in a Penguin edition while The Everyman Paperback Classics series issued editions of *The Whirlpool* and *In the Year of Jubilee*.



*Publishing and W.M. Thackeray*. Patten covered the period from 1846 to 1870, Shillingsburg the period from 1833 to 1863. Dickens and Thackeray were highly successful at their time, both were good businessmen, and both became rich from their writing. They also wrote serial novels and shilling or penny numbers, formats that were less common in the later nineteenth century. During the period examined in this thesis, i.e., from the 1880s to the end of the century, the reading population began to increase and the mechanics of modern book production had become established: cheap paper and stereotype editions lowered production costs, literary agents negotiated contracts on behalf of the author, and royalty payments began to replace outright copyright sales.

George Gissing's career as a novelist covers the end of the Victorian era, from 1880 to 1903 and he can be taken as representative of those authors who were widely regarded both at the time and to the present day as writers of great literary talent, but who never had the popular sales of contemporaries such as Mrs Oliphant, Ouida, or James Payn. Payn, Gissing's reader at Smith, Elder, was a popular and opportunistic novelist of his time who could have served as the model for Jasper Milvain in *New Grub Street*. They all outsold Gissing in his day but are almost unknown today. In *New Grub Street*, writing from his own life and the life of others of his contemporaries, including his brother Algernon, Gissing portrayed the lot of the talented late Victorian writer who lived at the edges of success and of failure.

Gissing's obituary in the *Times* called him "A good classical scholar and a man of the highest literary ideals, he cared little or nothing for what the average reading public thought of his work.' It went on 'The result was a series of books which, if they cannot justly be called great work, were at least the work of a very able and conscientious literary artist, whose purity and solidity may win him a better chance of being read a hundred years hence than many writers of greater grace and more deliberately sought charm.'"(*Times*, 'Mr. George Gissing', 29 December 1903: 4).

Gissing's career also spanned that of the height and the decline of the three-decker novel, the rise of the literary agent, and the increasing importance of sales of foreign rights. Eleven publishers (Bentley; Black; Blackie; Cassell; Chapman & Hall; Constable; Lawrence & Bullen; Methuen; Remington; Smith, Elder & Co.; and T. Fisher Unwin) took his novels, providing us with a broader scope of publisher relations than can be found with Dickens or Thackeray. Gissing engaged all three of the major literary agents of the time: A.P. Watt, J.B. Pinker, and W.M. Colles. Mudie's Select Library and other subscription-based circulating libraries and Victorian censorship also figure in his career, as his novel, *Mrs Grundy's Enemies*, was accepted, re-written, and finally suppressed by Bentley both for fear of Mudie and because Bentley could not reconcile realistic writing to his own moral standards. Historically, Gissing's active period encompasses the rise in the reading public wrought by the Education Act of 1870, the growth of public libraries, the changes to American copyright of 1891 and the growth of an international book market. Although, as Altick says, the Education Act may have only insured that literacy rates in England and Wales only continued an increase that had started earlier, there was an increase of literacy for males from 80.6 percent in 1871 to 93.6 percent by 1891 and for females from 73.2 percent to 92.7 percent (Altick 171).

Some figures show the growth in novel publishing. In 1884 the *Publishers' Circular* counted 408 new 'novels, tales, and other fiction'. By 1889 that number had more than doubled and in 1903, the year of Gissing's death, the *Publishers' Circular* number had grown to 1,859 (see Appendix, Table 5). Jonathan Rose, in his *Intellectual Life of the British Working Class* (418) cites a fourfold increase in the number of magazines published between 1875 and 1903 and an increase in authors, editors, and journalists from 687 in 1861 to 3,434 in 1881 and 17,786 by 1911. The growth of literacy, increasing access to reading materials and the end of the expensive three-decker novel both helped to create new markets for literature. For those with talent and

perseverance, the production of literature had become a profession with a market hungry for its products, although it remained a profession with a limited but growing number of practitioners. Walter Besant estimated that during the time Gissing was active there were only 1,300 living novelists who were successful enough to be found in the W.H. Smith circulating library catalogue, of whom only 500 or so were able to earn a living (Besant, *Pen* 143).

Pierre Coustillas, the leading Gissing scholar and editor of his diary and letters, has written that ‘anyone wishing to investigate the rules, practices and pitfalls of publishing, on both publisher's and author's sides, in the latter part of the 19th century, can profitably turn to Gissing's case’ (Coustillas, ‘Aspects’ 4). Few writers of this period have left behind as detailed an account of the economics of their career as has Gissing. By examining the financial, contractual, and literary arrangements that existed between Gissing and his publishers and how Gissing’s relationships with his publishers compared with those of his contemporaries, this thesis will show that Gissing’s experience was representative of the majority of writers of the time. Forced to write to a three-decker length, constrained by the morals and preferences of the circulating libraries, and required to sell copyrights for initial publication, the system was justly described as procrustean by Gissing in *New Grub Street* (168) but one that provided little alternative until after 1894.

The value of the pound remained fairly constant throughout the Victorian era and to understand what that value would be in today’s terms I have been using an estimate of one 1890 shilling being the approximate equivalent of £5 today, the 1890 pound therefore being equal to £100. My estimate is different from others but close enough to serve as a reasonable approximation.<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this work I have

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<sup>5</sup> The House of Commons Library published a research paper in 1999 on the value of the pound from 1750 to 1998 that put the value of the pound in 1890 at about 68 times that of the 1998 pound, so £100

preferred to use a simple formula derived from what Gissing paid for lunch then and what he might pay today, and doing similar comparisons for other daily items in his diary and letters. In 1885 Gissing wrote to his sister Ellen that 'I am never hungry, & get a good dinner every day for 10d. – extravagant, but I can't help it.' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 374) Four years later the price of dinner went up by a half-pence, with a dinner of meat and two vegetables, bread and pudding costing 10 ½ d or just under £5 in today's money (Gissing, *London* 142). With my calculation, £100 in 1890 would be about £10,000, a number that I think is valid as a shorthand way to make it easier to understand why Gissing could live for a year on a £150 (£15,000 today) copyright sale, or imagine Ryecroft, or himself, living happily on a £300 annual income. Using that scale, a three-decker novel at 31s 6d would cost £150 today, a six-shilling book £30, a two-shilling yellow-back £10, and a sixpence novel £2.50. And a dinner at 10d would be £4.95, prices that we can understand as being realistic in our context of current academic texts, hardcover best-sellers, trade paperbacks, mass-market paperbacks, and an expensive meal on the Euston Road, a quick way to understand approximately what a shilling or £100 would be in today's money.

Except in the instance above, as a point of methodology I have tried to avoid speculation and drawing comparisons between the Victorian era and our own. I have relied on the documentary evidence of Gissing's letters and diary, on archival material, on contemporary manuals of practice, and on the existing publishers' ledgers. Interpretations by noted scholars of Gissing, literature, and book history are included but as this is an historical work, the history must stand on its own.

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then would be about £6,800 today. See Robert Twigger, *Inflation: The Value of a Pound 1750-1998*. House of Commons Research Paper. London: House of Commons Library, 1999. Another estimate would put the value at £6,219 using a retail price index with a different base but still using 1890 and 1998 as the target dates. Using a GDP (gross-domestic-product) deflator, £100 would be worth £8,083. Changing the target year to 2005 changes the amount to £9,533. See Lawrence H. Officer, 'Five Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a UK Pound Amount, 1830 – 2005,' *MeasuringWorth.Com*, 2006. <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/index.php#> (visited April 2007).

Following a study of the relevant literature and outline of primary and secondary sources used, this thesis is structured in seven chapters, each investigating one aspect of Victorian publishing using Gissing's experience to highlight the conditions that prevailed and the changes that were occurring. The first chapter, "A Man of His Day": George Gissing and Victorian Publishing' sets the context of Gissing as a novelist. The second chapter, 'Smith, Elder & Co. and the Realities of New Grub Street' examines the economics of late 19<sup>th</sup> century publishing by using the records, copyright ledgers, and contracts of one of Gissing's major publishers. Smith, Elder was not his only publisher, but their archive, preserved in the John Murray collection, provides the best insight into the details of production costs and sales available. Ledgers for Gissing's other major publisher, Lawrence and Bullen have not been located. The Bentley ledgers have been examined for the two titles Gissing published with him, but other publisher's ledgers were not examined as they published few titles.

Chapter three, 'The Age of the Middleman: George Gissing and His Literary Agents' demonstrates that the complexity of publishing after 1880, particularly the growth of an international market, required professional assistance from literary agents to secure the rights and rewards that authors were increasingly demanding. Chapter four, 'Changing Modes of Production: Gissing's Contracts' examines the various types of contracts in existence in 1880 and after and how they too, were changed by new markets and the rise of the agent. Chapter five, 'The Economics of the "Triple-headed Monster"' challenges several assumptions that Gissing, his contemporaries, and later scholars have made about the role of the three-volume novel. Chapter six looks at Gissing and serial publication, an area that Gissing could have exploited to his advantage had he chosen to do so. Chapter seven examines Gissing's contracts and the publishing practices of the time that initially gave an advantage to the publisher over the author but that changed over time as agents entered the field on behalf of the author

and as publishing itself became more complex. The concluding chapter argues that while authors could be and often were at the mercy of sometimes avaricious publishers, an author's earnings were dependent on the market. Although he was cheated by Bentley and Smith, Elder, Gissing was reasonably rewarded for most of his work. He could have earned more had he wished to turn to writing popular fiction and been more astute in some of his business dealings, but he valued his art and his literary reputation above financial rewards and suffered, as he knew he must, from his decisions. Gissing's talent and his dedication to his art set him apart from other writers but his experience in the commercial world of publishing was shared with his contemporaries.

## A Survey of the Literature

Much of this study was done using the archival resources of the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, the Research Libraries of the New York Public Library, the Lilly Library at Indiana University, and the archives of John Murray, at that time still housed in the Murray house in Albemarle Street and now relocated to the National Library of Scotland. The New York Public Library has many of the contracts negotiated by Colles and Pinker in its collection. The British Library holds the Bentley ledgers which were very useful not only for their accounts of the two books Gissing published with them but for the details of publishing practice that can be found by perusing them. The National Library of Scotland did not yet have the Smith, Elder archive that I needed but it does have an extensive collection of nineteenth century materials that always made my stay there profitable. The Lilly Library (Gissing mss., 1863-1958) was formerly deposited at the Berg Collection by its owners, the Pforzheimer family, but was sold to Bernard Quaritch in 1991 who in turn sold it to the Lilly Library (*George Gissing 1857-1903 v*). The 'Account of Books 1899-1901 [And] Account of Literary Work 1902-' , a running total of titles and amounts received that Gissing kept were very useful. Gissing's earnings prior to 1899 were kept in another account that was published in facsimile by George Matthew Adams in the *Colophon* in 1934. I was not able to visit the Beinecke Library at Yale, which also holds Gissing manuscripts and letters and the collection at Reading but I found adequate citations to their holdings in Gissing's *Collected Letters*.

The books and articles used for this study fall into five areas:

- The books that have become the standards of book history, such as Altick and Sutherland
- Other studies of the relationships of authors and publishers and of authors' relationship to their markets, such as Patten on Dickens, Shillingsburg on

Thackeray, and Anesko on James.

- Histories of publishing houses and booksellers, such as Gettmann on Bentley and Griest on Mudie's Select Library.
- Contemporary trade sources, such as *The Bookseller* and the *Publisher's Circular*, along with contemporary author's guides such as Sprigge's 1891 *The Methods of Publishing*.
- Gissing's extensive letters and diaries, bibliographies and catalogues of Gissing's publications, and biographical studies of George Gissing.

Marjorie Plant's *The English Book Trade: An Economic History of the Making and Sale of Books*, originally published in 1939 and with a third edition in 1974, is still recognized as the starting point for British publishing history. Frank Mumby's *Publishing and Bookselling* is another classic and provides a very good and fast-paced survey of publishing in the 1890s.<sup>6</sup>

The classic 1957 study, Richard D. Altick's *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*,<sup>7</sup> has been seminal to all histories of reading, bookselling, and publishing written since its first publication. His chapter on "The Book Trade, 1851-1900" summarizes the major events of the period: the introduction of new technologies that made cheaper books possible, the extension of education, the increase in income and wages, the death of the three-decker novel, the decline of the circulating libraries, and the rise of the affordable six-shilling novel.

John Sutherland's works on Victorian publishing have illustrated the importance of the field both as an independent study and in relationship of publishing to literature.

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<sup>6</sup> Marjorie Plant, *The English Book Trade: An Economic History of the Making and Sale of Books*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974). Frank Arthur Mumby, *Publishing and Bookselling: A History from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, Further rev. ed. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954).

<sup>7</sup> Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Columbus, OH, Ohio State University Press, 1998). The second edition includes a new introduction by Jonathan Rose and an updated bibliography. The text is unchanged.



His *Victorian Novelists and Publishers*<sup>8</sup> focuses on the commercial aspects of the relationship, but his timeframe is concentrated on 1850 to 1870. Besides Dickens and Trollope, *Victorian Novelists* examines the careers of Charles Lever and Harrison Ainsworth, two minor novelists who were popular at the time but whose sales and earnings declined as their novels fell out of favour. A chapter on Hardy's early years as a novelist illustrates the difficulties beginning novelists had in finding a publisher who would treat them fairly. I do think Sutherland is wrong on the role of the three-volume novel in encouraging novelists in England and the cheap American novel discouraging authors there (17). If American authors produced few great works during the period it may have had more to do with the fact that American piracy of English novelists drove American novelists from the field.<sup>9</sup> The three-volume novel is discussed at greater length in Chapter five of this thesis.

Five recent books provide a survey of publishing and book history. John Feather's *A History of British Publishing* went into its second edition in 2006. It could serve as a course text but its coverage of the 1880-1903 period is cursory and in at least two cases wrong in its conclusions. Feather is incorrect when he says that *Endymion*, published in 1880, was a 'massive popular success in its three-volume form' with sales outside the libraries. In fact Mudie alone bought nearly half of the 7,000 copy three-volume issue and found it stuck on his shelves when Longman issued the popular six-shilling edition four months later, selling over 8,000 copies within a month. I have seen no evidence that there were a great many sales of the three-volume edition beyond the libraries (Mudie's competitors would have bought most of the other half of the edition) and at that price I would doubt that there were. Longman lost money on the edition, simply because it would have taken a library sale of 14,000 copies to recover the

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<sup>8</sup> John Sutherland, *Victorian Novelists and Publishers*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1976).

<sup>9</sup> See William Charvat's *The Profession of Authorship in America 1800-1870*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 286 for the penetration of cheap English novels into America.

£10,000 fee he paid to Disraeli.<sup>10</sup> Feather is also wrong in asserting that the Society of Authors considered the royalty system to be the most equitable system for authors (138). The Society's opinion was that 'it is most satisfactory to those who know least about it' and recommended commission publishing as providing the best results for authors, Besant calling it the 'Method of the Future' (Sprigge 62, 66; Besant, *Pen* 207-213). The various systems of contracts and payments are more fully discussed in the last chapter of this thesis.

David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery have provided the first general texts that could be assigned to any of the increasing number of university courses on book history in their *An Introduction to Book History* and its companion, the *Book History Reader*. The coverage of the late Victorian period is necessarily brief but the reader does include relevant extracts by Sutherland, Feltes, Jonathan Rose, and Richard Altick. The *Book History Reader* can be supplemented for the Victorian era with Andrew King and John Plunkett's reader on *Victorian Print Media*. King and Plunkett include some very hard-to-find pieces by Heinemann and Besant, among others. Alexis Weedon's *Victorian Publishing: The Economics of Book Production for a Mass Market, 1836-1916* provides an overview of the topic, much of it based on her work with the Book Production Cost Database. It too would be a good text for an introductory course but adds little new insight to the subject.<sup>11</sup>

Nigel Cross's *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street* describes the 'common writer', authors who, like Gissing, did not achieve best-seller stardom and

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<sup>10</sup> John Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006). Feather (p. 126) bases his version on a mis-interpretation of Annabel Jones' "Disraeli's Endymion" in *Essays in the History of Publishing in Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the House of Longman 1724-1974*, (London: Longman, 1974) 141-86.

<sup>11</sup> David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, eds. *The Book History Reader*, (London: Routledge, 2002); David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, eds. *An Introduction to Book History*, (London: Routledge, 2005); Andrew King and John Plunkett, eds. *Victorian Print Media: A Reader*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Alexis Weedon, *Victorian Publishing: The Economics of Book Production for a Mass Market, 1836-1916*, (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2003).

wealth. It concludes its study with an examination of *New Grub Street* which Cross identifies as being written ‘at a time when social and economic changes had a more dramatic effect on the conditions of authorship than at any time since Gutenberg’, enumerating all of the changes that occurred between 1880 and 1895 (Cross 204-205). Cross sees *New Grub Street* in part as an expression of the conflict between those like Besant, who saw the creation of reading public by the Education Act of 1870 as a positive improvement, reading being at the very least an enlightening entertainment that would lead people from the music hall and public house to intellectual development, and Gissing, who saw it as producing a ‘quarter-educated’ and disaffected population.<sup>12</sup> Cross provides an excellent summary of the period, noting that while Heinemann complained in 1892 that increased royalties were leaving publishers with barely their expenses, he died in 1920, leaving an estate of £33,000 (212). Cross is percipient in seeing that realists such as Gissing were too ‘monochromatic’ for an audience that wanted adventure and sensation. They did not want a Zola without sex and crime.

There are three literary studies that cover 19<sup>th</sup> century publishing and that I found to be informative in their data and inspiring in their conception. Lee Erickson’s *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800-1850* covers a period earlier than the 1880-1903 span of Gissing’s career but it does explain the development of writing as a profession and the awareness of authors that the game was stacked in the publishers’ favour (181). Peter D. McDonald’s *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice 1880-1914* uses Bourdieu’s concept of the literary field to examine the interactions of authors and publishers, ‘not only with the actual interactions between [them] ... but with the implicit structures underlying such relations’ (McDonald 10). McDonald might express the differences between Gissing’s

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<sup>12</sup> Gissing used the term five times in *New Grub Street*, (492-493, 512-513) with Whelpdale referring to ‘the great new generation that is being turned out by the Board Schools, the young men and women who can just read, but are incapable of sustained attention.’

fictional Reardon and Milvain as a conflict or a differing world view between ‘purists’ who concerned themselves with the aesthetics of their craft and the ‘profiteers’ that saw markets and sales as the only value: opposites, but still working within an economic, historical, cultural, generational, gendered world that bound them together. McDonald uses Joseph Conrad and William Ernest Henley as examples of ‘purists’ in commerce, Arnold Bennett and his career as a novelist and journalist, and the relationship between George Newnes and Arthur Conan Doyle (mass-market publisher and historical novelist) to make his points. In so doing he provides many insights into the age, particularly the 1890s. Peter Keating’s *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875-1914* is just that: a social history of the novel and its creators. His observations on Gissing are interesting: although classed with Hardy, James, and Meredith, Gissing was 14 to 29 years younger than any of them and would have seen the world of the 1890s through different eyes than those of a mid-Victorian. Keating also discusses the end of the three-volume novel, using Reardon as an example of how many more one-volume books he would have had to sell to make £150. In this I believe his assumptions are wrong and I discuss this more fully in Chapter 5.<sup>13</sup>

Robert L. Patten (*Charles Dickens and His Publishers*), Peter L. Shillingsburg (*Pegasus in Harness: Victorian Publishing and W. M. Thackeray*) Michael Anesko (*'Friction with the Market': Henry James and the Profession of Authorship*), and Peter Morton (*Busiest Man in England: Grant Allen and the Writing Trade, 1875-1900*) have done in-depth studies of their respective authors and Victorian publishing.<sup>14</sup> Patten provides a chronological and

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<sup>13</sup> Lee Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800-1850*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Peter D McDonald, *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice 1880-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875-1914*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> Robert L Patten, *Charles Dickens and His Publishers*, (Oxford, Clarendon, 1978) and Peter L. Shillingsburg, *Pegasus in Harness: Victorian Publishing and W.M. Thackeray*, (Charlottesville, VA, University Press of Virginia, 1992); Michael Anesko, *'Friction with the Market': Henry James and the Profession of Authorship*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Peter Morton, *Busiest Man in England: Grant Allen and the Writing Trade, 1875-1900*, (London: Palgrave, 2005).

detailed study of Dickens's often stormy relationship with his publishers Macrone, Bentley, Bradbury and Evans, and Chapman and Hall. Dickens was as much a genius in business as he was in writing and he realized his worth as the most popular author of his time, choosing publishing formats that would maximize his income. Although Gissing was an admirer of Dickens, and wrote a critical study of him and prefaces for a collected edition of Dickens novels, the two were as far apart as Reardon and Milvain in *New Grub Street*, or it might be better seen as Dickens embodying, as Thackeray did, both the talent and aesthetic sense of Reardon and the commercial sense of Milvain. Gissing may have condemned Thackeray for writing 'below the demands of his art to conciliate Mrs Grundy' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 277) but Thackeray was a very different writer, a journalist who wrote to entertain. Shillingsburg portrays Thackeray's professional life in detail and the title, coming from *Pendennis*, reflects Thackeray's conception that genius is not 'exempt from the prose duties of this daily, bread-wanting, taxpaying life' (Thackeray I, 354). Anesko's history of James' professional life is interesting in the contrast it presents between the two markets, British and American that James wrote for. I do, however, take issue with Anesko's assumption that the English three-decker had more readers than its one-volume American counterpart: the numbers of British circulating library reader could not match the number of purchasers in America, and, after the cheap editions appeared, in Britain (Anesko 46). As Sutherland notes (*Victorian Novelists* 70-71), Harper's alone published over two million volumes each year while *Harper's Weekly*, with its serials of British and American fiction, had over five million subscribers in 1860.

Peter Morton's biography of Grant Allen structures its chapters to portray Allen as a salesman of literature, his stock in trade popular science and light fiction, becoming a 'prosperous tradesman' and 'retailing' his novel, *The Woman Who Did*. Allen determined to earn an income at least equal to that of a successful physician or lawyer

from his writing and by hard work, turning out article after article for journals, was able to do so for some time before having a best-seller in *The Woman Who Did*. He may well have been the busiest man in England but his career would also have to be compared to James Payn and other prolific contemporaries, men and women who wrote well, but wrote too quickly, driven to acquire the next cheque.

Royal A. Gettmann's *A Victorian Publisher: A Study of the Bentley Papers* provides a solid economic study of the publishing house of Richard Bentley and Son. Gettmann's chapter on the fate of *Mrs Grundy's Enemies*, a manuscript that Bentley purchased from Gissing, then found that despite extensive revisions it was too "unwholesome" to publish, covers the topic thoroughly. While Patten heads his chapter on Richard Bentley as "Dickens and the Burlington Street Brigand", Gettmann is sympathetic to Bentley's practices and credits him with a greater honesty than may in fact be the case. Gettmann (128) states incorrectly that the sales for *The Emancipated* totalled 829 copies when in fact the total sale up to the purchase of the copyright by Lawrence and Bullen was 585: Gettmann mistakenly added in 208 copies in stock and 4 presentation copies to his total. Gettmann attributed the sale of that number to the £129 19s 10d that Bentley spent on advertising the novel in comparison with the '412 copies' of *Thyrza* sold by Smith, Elder. Actually, Smith, Elder sold 444 copies, apparently selling two more to trade and remaindering 30 at 2s 3d each after they had written to Gissing in June 1890 offering £10 for the copyright. In the chapter that deals with the three-decker novel and Gissing, an otherwise excellent description of the form and of its demise, Gettmann incorrectly states that Gissing returned to publishing in three volumes after earning only £15 in half-profits from the two-volume *Isabel Clarendon*. In fact, while Gissing also

believed that two-volume novels paid less, he earned nothing at all from *Isabel Clarendon*, only receiving a promise from Chapman for a £15 advance that was never paid.<sup>15</sup>

James Hepburn's *The Author's Empty Purse and the Rise of the Literary Agent* and Simon Nowell-Smith's *International Copyright Law and the Publisher in the Reign of Queen Victoria* are the most definitive studies we have to date of literary agents and Victorian copyright law. Guinevere L. Griest's *Mudie's Circulating Library and the Victorian Novel* has never been surpassed and, given the lack of any of surviving records from Mudie's, may never be.

Studies in Victorian periodical publishing have been extensive and growing, with Graham Law's *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press* providing the best current historical overview. Jenifer Glynn's *Prince of Publishers: A Biography of George Smith* relies too much on Smith's own memoirs, which, as Sutherland and Bill Bell have noted, are the source of other histories of the company and may be flawed. Bell recreates some of the earlier history of the company by using other materials, but the lack of letter books and other documentary material make an in-depth history of the house a major challenge.<sup>16</sup>

Michael Collie's *George Gissing: A Bibliographical Study* went through two editions despite being rife with errors, inaccuracies, and a plain misreading of facts. For many years it was the only bibliography: the Quaritch catalogue of the Pforzheimer Collection of Gissing notes Collie's shortcomings while using the bibliography as its

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<sup>15</sup> Royal A Gettmann, *A Victorian Publisher: a Study of the Bentley Papers*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1960). The accounts for *The Emancipated* are in British Library ADD MS 46600, ledger page 867

<sup>16</sup> James Hepburn, *The Author's Empty Purse and the Rise of the Literary Agent*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); Simon Nowell-Smith, *International Copyright Law and the Publisher in the Reign of Queen Victoria*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968); Guinevere L. Griest, *Mudie's Circulating Library and the Victorian Novel*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970); Jenifer Glynn, *Prince of Publishers: A Biography of George Smith*, (London: Allison & Busby, 1986); Bell, Bill, "The Secret History of Smith & Elder: 'the Publisher's Circular' as a Source for Publishing History," In *A Genius for Letters: Booksellers and Bookselling from the 16th to the 20th Century*, edited by Robin Myers and Michael Harris, (Winchester: St Paul's Bibliographies, 1995, 167-179).

reference point (v-vi)<sup>17</sup>. Fortunately the Collie book has been supplanted by Pierre Coustillas' *George Gissing: The Definitive Bibliography*. Coustillas is the leading Gissing scholar and collector and this is, as the title says, definitive. On the whole this will stand as the most reliable source, not only for Gissing scholars, but for also all of those interested in the production of the 'common writers' of the 19th century. Coustillas' 'Aspects of the Late Victorian Publishing Scene: George Gissing and His Publishers' published in the *Journal-of-the-Eighteen-Nineties-Society (JENS)* (23; 1996) was the inspiration and foundation of this thesis. Coustillas and Colin Partridge edited a collection of reviews of Gissing's novels in *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, presenting Gissing as his contemporaries saw him. Coustillas is also the editor of Gissing's diary, published as *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, and, with Paul F. Mattheisen and Arthur C. Young, editor of the nine volume *Collected Letters of George Gissing*. As Coustillas notes in 'Aspects', Gissing is one of the most well-documented authors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and certainly as a 'common writer,' the best documented. The careful collection and research done by Coustillas, Mattheisen, and Young have provided a mine of material for anyone working on late Victorian book and literary history.<sup>18</sup>

While much of the material for the publishing firm of Richard Bentley survives, very little of the Smith, Elder archives and none of Lawrence and Bullen's remain to document more of Gissing's publications. Some statistical information can be gleaned from *The Publishers' Circular*. Understanding the nature of Victorian publishers and their

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<sup>17</sup> *George Gissing 1857-1903: Books, Manuscripts and Letters. A Chronological Catalogue of the Pforzheimer Collection*, (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1992).

<sup>18</sup> Collie, Michael. *George Gissing: A Bibliographical Study*. St. Paul's Bibliographies. new, rev. and extended ed. Winchester: St Paul's Bibliographies 1986; Coustillas, Pierre. *George Gissing: The Definitive Bibliography*. High Wycombe: Rivendale Press, 2005; Gissing, George. *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*. Ed. Pierre Coustillas. Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978; Gissing, George. *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*. Eds. Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas. 9 vols. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990-1997.



accounting methods has been difficult, but it was helped by an 1897 accounting manual, Clarence E. Allen's *Publishers' Accounts, Including a Consideration of Copyright and the Valuation of Literary Property*. The various publications of the Society of Authors and Walter Besant's *The Pen and the Book* are very useful in providing contemporary accounts of the various forms of contracts existing at the time, the problems with each, and the pitfalls that could trap unwary authors. The artificial accounts published as examples by the Society and Besant were criticized by contemporary publishers but do come close enough to actual accounts from Smith, Elder and Bentley to be accepted as a reasonable estimate of expenses for a mid-range publisher. Leopold Wagner's manual for young authors is also instructive of contemporary practices and often cited in publishing histories. George Haven Putnam published his own manual of advice to authors, this time from the standpoint of a publisher. It went through several editions, and, while informative, is concerned primarily with the American market. Very little Mudie material exists, but William C. Preston's article on Mudie's in *Good Words*, October 1894 provides a tour of the Oxford Street shop, well illustrated by F. G. Kitton and W. D. Almond. Kitton was not only an illustrator but also a collector and biographer of Dickens. Gissing worked with him on the Rochester edition of Dickens.<sup>19</sup>

The *Times Online* has been a highly useful resource, as have the digitization projects of Google and Microsoft, not only in providing original texts of the *Times* but also works such as Walter Besant's *The Pen and the Book* or *The Methods of Publishing*, saving wear on my fragile originals. The *Times* and the digitized works have been used

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<sup>19</sup> Walter Besant, *The Pen and the Book*, (London: Thomas Burleigh, 1899); S. Squire Sprigge, *The Methods of Publishing*, (London: Society of Authors, 1891); Clarence E. Allen, *Publishers' Accounts: Including a Consideration of Copyright and the Valuation of Literary Property*, (London: Gee & Co, 1897); G. H. Putnam, *Authors and Publishers: A Manual of Suggestions for Beginners in Literature; Comprising a Description of Publishing Methods...Explanations of the Details of Book Manufacturing...Specimens of Typography...Etc.* 4th ed., (New York; London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1885); Leopold Wagner, *How to Publish a Book or Article and How to Produce a Play: Advice to Young Amateurs*, (London: George Redway, 1898); William C Preston, *Mudie's Library, Illustrated by F. G. Kitton and W. D. Almond*, reprinted from *Good Words*, October 1894 (London: 1894); Andrew Sanders, 'Kitton, Frederic George (1856–1904)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004), [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34344>, accessed 18 Feb 2007]

primarily as discovery tools for searching advertisements, footnotes, and reviews. Professor Mitsuharu Matsuoka of Nagoya University in Japan has digitized most of Gissing's works and made available back issues of the *Gissing Journal* from its founding in 1965 to 1990 on his 'Gissing in Cyberspace' Website (<http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/Gissing.html>). The *Gissing Journal*, originally the *Gissing Newsletter*, is focused primarily on the literary aspects of Gissing's life and work and is a useful source for book and thesis reviews, and newly discovered material. The ProQuest Literature Online database also contains four authoritative digital editions of *The Nether World*, *New Grub Street*, *The Odd Women*, and *The Whirlpool*, scanned from Chadwyck-Healy's Nineteenth-Century Fiction database.

Of the many biographies, I have relied on three: Jacob Korg's *George Gissing: A Critical Biography* and Gillian Tindall's *The Born Exile: George Gissing* are excellent critical and biographical studies of Gissing in the context of his life. Robert L. Selig's *George Gissing* provides a succinct summary of Gissing's life and place in literature.<sup>20</sup> In all, there is substantial primary and secondary material on both Victorian publishing and on George Gissing, but not so much as to be overwhelming.

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<sup>20</sup> Jacob Korg, *George Gissing: A Critical Biography*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963); Gillian Tindall, *The Born Exile: George Gissing*, (London: Temple Smith, 1974); Robert L. Selig, *George Gissing*, (New York: Twayne, 1995).

## Chapter 1: 'A Man of His Day': George Gissing and Victorian Publishing

The framework of this thesis is based on the experience of one novelist and the changing conditions of publishing during the period in which he worked, 1880-1903. This chapter presents a brief biography of George Gissing that will help to put his writings into the context of their time, and an overview of some of the changes that occurred in publishing prior to and after 1880, providing context for the publishing scene in which Gissing worked. Gissing's own experiences were highly influential on his writing. His early indiscretions and poverty influenced the realistic settings of his novels among the poor and working class and his pessimism carried over into his later novels, set among the middle class. The settings and darkness of his novels would keep Gissing from appealing to a popular market, while the growth of a larger and international market at the same time provided room for new voices, such as Gissing's.

Born in Wakefield, Yorkshire in 1857, George Robert Gissing was the second son of Thomas Waller Gissing (1829-1870), a pharmacist, poet, and avid botanist, who published two books on the flora of Wakefield and its environs in the 1860s.<sup>21</sup> Thomas died in 1870, leaving his wife and five children. All of the children seem to have inherited Thomas' intellect and writing abilities and their surviving letters show an ease and felicity with the language. George and his younger brother Algernon (1860-1937) both became fiction writers and his sister Ellen (1867-1938) wrote religious books.<sup>22</sup>

George Gissing entered Owens College, Manchester, in 1872 at the age of 15 and three years later met and fell in love with Marianne Helen 'Nell' Harrison (1858-1888), a prostitute. The affair was to change his life forever. In the spring of 1876 he

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<sup>21</sup> *The Ferns and Fern allies of Wakefield and its Neighbourhood*, Wakefield: R. Micklethwaite, 1862; *Materials for a Flora of Wakefield and its Neighbourhood*, London: Huddersfield, 1867.

<sup>22</sup> Algernon's novels included *A Village Hampden*, London: Hurst & Blackett, 1890; *Both of this Parish. A Story of the Bynways*, London: Hurst & Blackett, 1889; *The Dreams of Simon Usher*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1907; *Joy Cometh in the Morning: A Country Tale*, London: Hurst & Blackett: London, 1888; *The Scholar of Bygate*, London: Hutchinson & Co., 1897; and several guides to rural England, including *The Footpath Way in Gloucestershire*, London: Dent, 1924.

was caught stealing money for Nell from the Owens College cloakroom, arrested, and jailed for one month at hard labour. In the fall of 1876, the nineteen-year-old Gissing went to America, first teaching in Waltham, Massachusetts, then moving to Chicago, where he contributed short stories to Chicago newspapers. Unsuccessful in America he returned to England in 1877, settling in London with Nell. They were married in 1879, after Gissing received an inheritance that stemmed mostly from the generosity of a wealthy friend of his father's family. Determined to be a novelist, he published his first story in England in *Tinsley's Magazine*, a revision of a story earlier published in Chicago, and began writing novels.<sup>23</sup> His first novel rejected, he began another, *Workers in the Dawn*, which he completed at the end of 1879. Rejected for publication by several publishers, Gissing used £125 of his inheritance to pay for its publication by Remington in 1880. Making less than £10 in 1880 from his early writings, including the 16 shillings he earned from *Workers in the Dawn*, Gissing lived by tutoring upper-class children, having as many as ten students by 1882 and teaching from 9 until 6 (Gissing, *Collected Letters* I, 73). In 1888, having by then published five more novels, Gissing was able to give up tutoring and earn his living entirely by writing.<sup>24</sup>

Nell's alcoholism led to a separation that lasted for five years, until her death in 1888. She had been in ill health since at least early 1879 (Gissing, *Collected Letters* I, 142). In 1881 Nell lived briefly in Hastings for her health, returning within a few weeks to the small flat Gissing rented off Euston Square. By 1882, her condition worsened and she was given to having convulsions while shopping. Gissing placed her in an invalid home in Battersea for 15/ a week but she left a few months later for a flat of her own in Soho Square, then moved to Brixton. Gissing paid her weekly expenses, amounting to 15/ or

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<sup>23</sup> 'The Artist's Child,' *Tinsley's Magazine*, January 1878: 80-88. It is unknown what he was paid for it.

<sup>24</sup> The novels were *The Unclassed*, Chapman & Hall, 1884, *Demos*, Smith, Elder, 1886, *Isabel Clarendon*, Chapman & Hall, 1886, *Thyrza*, Smith, Elder, 1887, *A Life's Morning*, Smith, Elder, 1888. Gissing had also sold *Mrs Gundy's Enemies* to Bentley in 1882 but it was never published.

£1, most of which went on drink. Her death may have inspired his next novel, *The Nether World*, a portrayal of the London underclass in which Nell lived.

In late 1890, Gissing was alone, frustrated, and felt unable to work properly unless he was married.<sup>25</sup> He started writing a new novel that was to become *New Grub Street* in mid-September, and the next week met Edith Underwood (1867-1917), daughter of a Camden shopkeeper, at a music hall (Korg, *George Gissing* 151).. On the first of October he began again on the novel, now called *New Grub Street*, and was seeing Edith regularly for morning walks and evening visits at his flat. By the end of the week he was writing to his sister that he would possibly marry by the end of the year. The next day he sold much of his personal library for £6 5s, an event that would appear in *New Grub Street*. (Gissing, *London* 226-227). On 6 December 1890 *New Grub Street* was finished and Gissing felt that he had committed himself to a life removed from that of the educated middle class forever. Some of what was in his mind at the time is certainly reflected in *New Grub Street*. Reardon's educated wife leaves him ostensibly because he would never be able to support her in the manner she was accustomed to. Reardon muses that he would have been better remaining in the country, married to an 'unambitious country girl.' Gissing wrote to his friend Eduard Bertz on 6 September, 1890 that 'Marriage, in the best sense, is impossible, owing to my insufficient income; educated English girls *will* not face poverty in marriage, & to them anything under £400 a year is serious poverty' (Gissing, *Collected Letters*, IV, 235).

In January 1891, after Smith, Elder accepted *New Grub Street* for £150, Gissing moved to Exeter, taking Edith with him after their marriage in February. Unfortunately, Edith was not to be the compliant working girl that would be grateful for Gissing for his intellect and attention. By 1894, Edith was showing signs of the violent insanity that

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<sup>25</sup> After months of aborted starts on a new novel, Gissing wrote in his diary on 16 September that he felt 'like a madman at times. I know that I shall never do any more good work until I am married' (Gissing, *London* 226).

would force Gissing to leave her in 1897, shortly after the lung condition that would eventually kill him was detected (Gissing *Collected Letters* VI, 233). Edith was committed to an institution in 1902 and died in 1917 of 'an organic brain disease' (*Diary*, 576). Despite the constant turbulence at home, Gissing published eight novels and several short stories during those six years and became recognized as one the outstanding novelists of the period.

On 6 July 1898 Gissing met Gabrielle Marie Edith Fleury (1868-1954), who wanted to translate *New Grub Street* into French, and within days they had fallen in love. In May 1899 they began living together in France as man and wife, even though Gissing was still legally married to Edith. Gissing had begun to move beyond novels and during the last years of his life wrote a critical study of Charles Dickens and introductions to a series of Dickens' novels, a travel book, *By the Ionian Sea*, and his most popular book, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. Ill for much of 1903, he worked on *Veranilda*, a novel of ancient Rome. In his final days he was nursed by Gabrielle and by H.G. Wells, and died of myocarditis in France at Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port on 28 December 1903. Gissing's obituaries mentioned his early poverty but his marriage to Nell, his prison term, and his self-exile to America were never revealed, not even to his close friend H.G. Wells, who, discovering it after Gissing's death, never forgave him.

George Gissing left an estate of £1053 gross, £959 net. His literary remains were left to Algernon, to dispose of as he saw fit, with the exception of his diary, which was left in trust for his son, presumably the eldest, Walter (*Times* "Wills and Charitable Bequests", 18 November 1904, 7). As a comparison, Thackeray, at his death in 1863, left an inheritance of £18,000, £400 of in the value of his wine. Gissing left behind two sons, Walter (1891-1916) who studied architecture and was killed at the battle of the Somme in 1916 and Alfred (1896-1975) who lived in Switzerland from the end of the Second World War and wrote and edited books about his father.

Gissing's diary, letters, and account books were sold over the years by his family and most, but not all, can be found in the collections at Yale University, the New York Public Library, and the Lilly Library at Indiana University. A selection of Gissing's letters to his family was first published in 1927. Gissing's letters to his friends Eduard Bertz and H.G. Wells and his letters to Gabrielle Fleury were published in the 1960s.<sup>26</sup> The *Collected Letters* have assembled those and others from private collections, adding extensive scholarly annotations.<sup>27</sup>

Gissing had many correspondents the most important of whom were his brother Algernon, and his sisters, Margaret (1863-1930) and Ellen. Algernon studied law but after 1880 devoted himself to writing. Algernon primarily wrote rural novels that sold poorly and for which he seldom earned more than £50. With a wife and five children he was dependent on a series of loans from George, and, in later years, on assistance from the Civil List. His obituary calls him a 'Johnsonian and Novelist' who was 'a landscape artist in words of no small ability.' (*Times* 'Mr. A. Gissing Johnsonian and Novelist', 9 February 1937: 16). Gissing provided advice and counsel to his brother and there is much discussion of the mechanics of writing and publishing in their correspondence.

Gissing exchanged many letters with Eduard Bertz [1853-1931], a German writer who Gissing met in 1878 and with Morley Roberts (1857-1942), a classmate of Gissing's at Owens College. Roberts is best known for writing *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*, a fictionalised biography of Gissing that revealed his unfortunate marriages.<sup>28</sup> During the 1890s Gissing also corresponded with Clara Collet, (1860-1948), Labour

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<sup>26</sup> *Letters of George Gissing to Members of His Family*, (London: Constable & Company Ltd, 1927); George Gissing and H.G. Wells, *Their Friendship and Correspondence*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1961); *The Letters Of George Gissing To Eduard Bertz, 1887-1903*, (London: Constable: 1961); and *The Letters of George Gissing to Gabrielle Fleury*, (New York: New York Public Library, 1964).

<sup>27</sup> George Gissing, *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*. Eds. Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas. 9 vols. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990-1997.

<sup>28</sup> Morley Roberts, *The Private Life of Henry Maitland: a Record Dictated by J.H. Revised and Edited by Morley Roberts*, (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1912).

correspondent for the Board of Trade, who worked with Charles Booth on the London poor and became a close friend of Gissing's. Gissing met H.G. Wells at the Omar Khayyám Club in 1896 and they became close friends, bicycling and travelling abroad together. A collection of their correspondence was later edited by Royal A. Gettmann (c.f. footnote 26).

When Gissing published his first novel in 1880, publishing was little changed from what it had been earlier in the century. The twenty years of his career would see the complementary development of modern publishing and a mass market for its products, replacing the previous market that existed because of high prices, the circulating libraries, and a more limited audience. From the publication of Scott's precedent-setting three-volume *Kenilworth* at 31s 6d in 1821 through to the end of the 1880s there existed a genteel Mudie audience and small market. What had changed by 1880 that would lay the foundations of publishing as we know it today?

John Chapman gave three reasons for books being so expensive in mid-century. First, there were taxes. The paper duty, originally set at 3d a pound, latter reduced by half in 1837, was not abolished until 1861 and made up a larger portion of the cost of a cheaper book than it did of a more expensive one. The tax was only 1.25% of a 10-shilling book but added 5% to a book selling for 2/6d. And that was only for the tax. Chapman reported that a Scottish papermaker who made 12 tonnes of paper would have to weigh each ream four times to mark the weights and tax, costing him £100 in labour alone (Chapman 3). The paper duty paid on Charles Knight's twenty-seven volume *Penny Cyclopaedia*, published in weekly parts between 1833 and 1843, was £16,500 (Altick 282). Not only books felt the tax, all printed items did, with a deleterious effect on reading. In New York, where there was no excise duty, the newspaper circulation was 'one for every ten inhabitants of New York.' (Chapman 5). For London, with a paper tax and a newspaper tax (not abolished until 1855), Chapman



estimated the circulation to be 'less than one for every hundred inhabitants' (Chapman 5). There was also a duty on advertising of 3s 6d on each advertisement, no matter what the length, that also drove up what was already a large portion of a publisher's costs. Chapman claimed that Colburn and Bentley spent £27,000 from 1830-1832 on advertising and in 1852 the separate houses spent £5,000 each (Chapman 7). Customs duties and the lack of an Anglo-American copyright indirectly contributed to costs by keeping the English edition sizes smaller as English books imported to the United States were charged a 10% customs duty and reprints were charged 20%, making them more expensive than any United States pirate edition (Chapman 15).

Secondly, publishing and bookselling ran as a closed shop, with booksellers fixing prices to discourage underselling and publishers giving far greater discounts to the libraries and to large London booksellers than they gave to others. Publishers dinner sales, with catalogues and invitations issued only to 'select booksellers of London and Westminster' kept out provincial booksellers who then were not able to enjoy terms that were 10% to 15% below trade, plus credit up to 16 months for large purchases (Chapman 20). The larger firms thus had a discount closer to 42% as opposed to the standard, one-third of the retail price as well as receiving 25 copies for the price of 24 or, for cheaper books, 13 as 12 or 7 as 6½ (Chapman 20; Plant 408).

...why are novels, narratives, of voyages and travels... either spread out into the most ludicrous state of attenuation, or remorselessly cut down... to fit them for the publisher's Procrustean bed of three volumes post octavo? Simply because the said publisher knows that books of this class *will* be had at almost any price by the few; and in the face of the difficulties he has to encounter from the high price of paper and advertising, he finds it easier and more profitable to sell 500 copies of a work at a guinea and half per copy, than 5000 at half a crown, or 50,000 at a shilling. Mr Bentley's 'Library of Standard Novels' was an exceptional experiment in the right direction, but to make it known efficiently he had to spend *three thousand five hundred pounds!* (Chapman 8, italics in original).

Technological changes had lowered production costs considerably by mid-century. Steam printing had begun replacing hand printing by the 1840s and

stereotyping meant that later editions and large printings could be done without the expense of composition or keeping type standing (Plant 275-279). Stereotypes could also be stored, shipped abroad, or sold to other publishers. The introduction of continuous paper manufacture on the Fourdrinier machine in 1804, the development of esparto paper in 1857, and the patenting of paper made from cellulose from 1860 to 1873 made cheap substitutes for rag paper, lowering paper costs substantially. Paper would become still cheaper after the end of the paper duty in 1861 (Plant 336-337). New binding methods, including paper boards to replace leather and more importantly, case binding to replace sewing, were introduced in the early years of the nineteenth century. Case binding appeared prior to 1850 and by 1890 at least half of the binding process could be done by machine. Binding costs prior to mid-century were between 3d or 4d a copy cheaper by 1890. William Clowes, according to the family history, realized that affordable books would increase the demand for them and installed a steam-driven press in 1823 (Clowes 21). Clowes became the publisher for Charles Knight's Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, printing *The British Almanac* for him in 1828 and continuing as its printer for the next 50 years. Selling at 2s 6d, the *Almanac* sold 20,000 in its first year, 37,000 in the second and 42,000 in the third. To offset the tax on paper and keep the purchasing price affordable for the 200,000 weekly copies of Knight's *Penny Magazine*, Clowes had to keep printing costs as low as possible and by 1839 had put 20 steam presses into operation (Clowes 31-32). In 1875 Clowes installed an automatic composing machine, using electricity to set type (Clowes 60). By 1880 technological changes had made the production of low-cost editions possible and certainly increased publishers' profit margins.

Political and legal changes also had an enormous impact on publishing. In 1850 the Public Libraries (Ewart) Act was passed. Even though it would be years before England generally had public libraries that would match what Gissing saw in Boston in

1876, they would in time provide a new market for publishers and a challenge to the circulating libraries. In 1870, the Education Act would help consolidate and expand the new market for reading and literature. It was reinforced in 1880 when elementary education was made compulsory from ages seven to ten. Piracy of British works in America was finally stopped in 1891 by the passage of an American copyright law. Not only would it secure the rights of British authors but also, as Simon Nowell-Smith noted, after 1891 the British publisher was naturally reluctant to go to the expense of printing three volumes of a novel for the British market which had also to be manufactured as single volume in America (Nowell-Smith 82).

There were other, more subtle changes that would have an impact on publishing. On 25 September 1885 C.E. Mudie complained to Bentley that he was losing money on two-thirds of the three-volume novels he purchased, the first hint of the eventual end of the three-volume novel (Griest 168). In 1892 the first automatic telephone switchboard was installed. In 1901 Gissing talked of Wells' new house at Sandgate, near Folkestone, 'where, sitting at his ease, he communicates with London by telephone! That kind of thing will never fall to me.' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 147). Gissing may not have used one, but improved communications between publishers and agents and an international market were beginning. On 13 July 1894, Arthur Mudie demanded an end to the three-decker novel. And in the spring of 1896, an oil lamp flare-up made Gissing afraid that the lamps would cause a fire. He had gas lamps put in to his house but an unstopped pipe and a workman who tested for leaks with a lit candle resulted in an explosion that damaged the drawing and dining rooms. The more explosive impact would be that gas-light provided a better reading light – how much this encouraged publishing may be impossible to determine, but the effects that education, an international market, improved communications, 'free' books in public

libraries, and improved lighting at home for the 'common reader' would have on readers, publishers, and authors all have to be taken into account..

In 1892, Gissing asked 'Who in heaven's name *buys* all the books that come forth? This is an endless mystery. Day by day new publishing firms appear, & the weekly issue of books is appalling. There must be thousands of people who are accumulating huge libraries, -- yet I don't know one of them.' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 11). One of the myths concerning the era was that novels were borrowed from circulating libraries, and never purchased (Erickson, *Economy* 132-133; Griest 82; Sutherland, *Victorian Novelists* 12). First editions, at 31s 6d were not affordable and certainly not purchased by any but a few, but their cheap, affordable, editions at 6s, at 3s 6d, at 2s and finally at 6d were bought and were read. Late Victorian publishers and authors were not sustained by the circulating libraries but by the growing mass market for literature that developed after the education reforms of 1870 and the growth of a middle class that produced a new reading audience. Publishers were slow to recognize this, or perhaps slow to acknowledge it publicly. The increasingly short intervals between expensive library first editions and cheap, popular, mass market editions showed publishers' understanding of the market long before Mudie and W.H. Smith refused to carry any more three-volume novels. The circulating libraries were under pressure not from the free public libraries but from an overwhelming increase in the number of novels that were being published and the publishers increasing interest in supplying the new market with affordable books.

Walter Besant compared the number of readers in the 1890s with those in 1830, estimating that in 1830 Britain had a reading population of only 50,000 out of its 24 million people. There may have been more literate people in the population but taxes on paper, newspapers, and advertising made reading an expensive pastime. By the 1890s the population in Britain had grown to 40 million, with an additional 6 million in

Canada, over 5 million in Australia and New Zealand, 2 million in South Africa, plus a reading population in India, and the other colonies. Coupled with the American International Copyright Act and an American population of over 62 million, there was potentially an English-reading audience of 120 million, compared to 50,000 only 65 years before (Besant, *Pen and the Book* 27-30).<sup>29</sup> Besant never claimed that his figures were accurate but he was right in so far as by the end of the century there was a new, larger, and international market for books that had not existed previously. It also meant that there was more than just a single right to volume publication that could be sold, but also the English and American serial rights, the American volume right, colonial and continental rights, translation and dramatic rights (Besant, *Pen and the Book* 139-140). Managing all of the possible sales for a manuscript had become more than most authors could cope with and by the end of the century many were turning to literary agents to help them. Gissing would use all three of the major agents of the day, their services allowing him to increase his income and to live abroad.

Gissing titled the first chapter of *New Grub Street* 'A Man of His Day' and he opens the novel with an introduction in which Milvain contrasts himself with Reardon. Milvain as the literary tradesman describes Reardon as 'behind his age', working as if he were still in 'Sam Johnson's Grub Street' (Gissing, *New Grub Street* 5). As the following chapters will show, Gissing was also very much 'A Man of His Day', working in the same milieu as Milvain and his contemporaries, working as a professional writer and having to deal with the changing economics and markets of the late nineteenth century.

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<sup>29</sup> William St Clair, in his *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 478, gives estimates of the size of the reading public from Edmund Burke in the 1790s and the *Edinburgh Review* in 1814 that both estimate 80,000 readers, and perhaps as many as 400,000 who read newspapers. The number of newspaper readers as distinct from book readers indicates the difficulty relating simple literacy to book reading.

## Chapter 2: Smith, Elder & Co. and the Realities of *New Grub Street*

Smith, Elder and Co. was a traditional publishing firm founded in 1816, and one of the leading publishers of the nineteenth century. Gissing's dealings with them reflect the earlier practices of mid-century when a gentleman author would deal directly with a gentleman publisher, selling the copyright outright for publication to the limited market of the circulating libraries and their patrons. Over a period of four years, Smith, Elder published five of Gissing's novels: *Demos* (1886), published anonymously, *Thyrza* (1887), *A Life's Morning* (1888), *The Nether World* (1889), and *New Grub Street* (1891). *Demos: A Story of English Socialism* established Gissing's reputation.

Gissing always knew the importance of having a book published by an established literary house such as Smith, Elder and sent the manuscript of his first novel, *Workers in the Dawn* to them in January 1880. They declined to publish it, saying 'It has great graphic power and some humour, but in our opinion it is very deficient in Dramatic Interest. As a series of scenes the book is good, but as a continued tale it fails to meet the requirements of the reader of fiction' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* I, 235). In September 1882 he submitted the manuscript of *Mrs Grundy's Enemies*, then called 'Now or Never', to Smith but they again declined, commenting 'It exhibits a great deal of dramatic power and is certainly not wanting in vigour, but in our judgement it is too painful to please the ordinary novel reader and treats of scenes that can never attract the subscribers to Mr. Mudie's Library' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 99). Bentley would later accept the novel, have it rewritten, and finally, when it was in press, withdraw it from publication for fear of rejection by Mudie. The manuscript is now lost, so we may never know Gissing's novelistic reaction to Mrs Grundy.

The history of Smith, Elder & Co. can be traced from various sources; George Murray Smith's unpublished memoirs at the National Library of Scotland, Leonard Huxley's history of the firm, privately published in 1923, Jenifer Glynn's *Prince of*

*Publishers: a Biography of George Smith*, based largely on the Smith memoirs, and in a summary by Barbara Quinn Schmidt in Volume 154 of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. Parts of Smith's memoirs were published in the *Cornhill Magazine* from November 1900 to February 1901 ( and the Introduction to the 1901 edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, founded by Smith, has a memorial of him written by Sir Sidney Lee. Bill Bell (1995) uses the *Publisher's Circular* to recreate in part the history of Smith, Elder, noting that much of the material that was available to Huxley no longer exists. The house's letter books are gone and only the ledgers, translation rights books, and a few items exist in the John Murray archives, where they were deposited when the firm was sold to Murray in 1916. John Sutherland has called Smith's own memoirs doubtful, as his memory may not have been reliable.<sup>30</sup> What follows is only an outline of the history of Smith, Elder. The firm deserves a critical history as the books and articles published by it and by Smith's *Cornhill Magazine* are so important to understanding nineteenth-century literature and publishing. The following brief outline of their history has been compiled from the sources mentioned above.

Smith, Elder was founded in London in 1816 by two Scotsmen, George Smith (1789-1846) and Alexander Elder (1790-1876). Smith, the son of a farmer, apprenticed himself to an Elgin bookseller and banker but left for London where he worked for Riverton and then for John Murray. While working for John Murray, Smith partnered with Elder to start Smith, Elder, with Elder working at the partnership during the day and Smith joining him in the evening after working his daytime job at Murray's. The first Smith, Elder advertisement appeared on the first page of the *Times* on 29 July 1817. At that time they called themselves stationers and were located at 158 Fenchurch Street. As stationers and booksellers, Smith, Elder made a specialty of exporting books to

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<sup>30</sup> Bill Bell, "The Secret History of Smith & Elder", 178, citing Sutherland's Mrs. Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian, Pre-Eminent Edwardian, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, 387.

officers in the East India Company. The earliest book bearing a Smith, Elder imprint in the British Library catalogue is *Recollections of a Ramble during the Summer of 1816*, published in 1817. In 1818, they jointly published with J. Hatchard, William Henry Harrison's *Montfort: A Poem, in Three Cantos* and in 1819 *The Dead Asses. A Lyrical Ballad*, a poem that was signed W. W., the implication being that it was by William Wordsworth. This was the first book they advertised in the *Times* as publishers, on 21 August 1819 (4). It was announced as being 'printed for Smith and Elder, Fenchurch Street' and sold for 2s. In 1822 they began publishing a new series of the *Newcastle Magazine* (*Times* 2 January 1822: 3 ). In 1823 the firm became Smith, Elder, & Company, having taken on Patrick Stewart as a partner and expanded their business interests to include banking, insurance, and shipping to the colonies. Elder managed the publishing side. In 1824, after the birth of George Murray Smith (1824-1901), the firm and Smith's household relocated from Fenchurch Street to 65 Cornhill.

George Murray Smith began working in the firm at the age of fourteen. When he was nineteen he secured £1,500 from his father as capital and took over the struggling publishing department from Elder. Young, energetic, ambitious, decisive, and widely-read, if not literary, George Murray Smith increased not only the publishing arm of the business but also expanded its activities in others areas, including shipping insurance. In 1846 the elder George Smith died, leaving George Murray Smith, then twenty-two, in charge of publishing while Stewart continued to run the foreign agency. Despite success in both areas of the firm, Smith realized that Smith, Elder was losing money. An investigation showed that Stewart had been embezzling from the firm; Smith did not prosecute and even kept Stewart on for some time, until Stewart went to India, dying there in 1852. Smith took it upon himself to keep the firm from bankruptcy. He nearly ruined his health working long hours, day and night, and managing both the publishing and trading sides, but he paid his creditors and increased



the firm's turnover by over £10,000 within five years, then doubled and tripled it, until by 1866 the firm brought in over £627,000 and Smith, Elder employed over 200 people. Book publishing was only one part of Smith's business, as he started publishing the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1859, the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1865, and, after sampling Apollinaris water in 1872, bought the company and made £1.5 million, which helped him fund the *Dictionary of National Biography*, which began appearing in 1885. George Smith died in 1901 and the firm was taken over by his son-in-law, Reginald Smith, who had joined the firm in 1894. After Reginald's death the firm merged with John Murray in 1917. They continued to publish Gissing's novels under the Murray imprint until they sold the rights and the stereotype plates to Nash Grayson in May 1927.

When George Gissing came to Smith, Elder in 1885, George Smith was 61 and not as active in the daily life of the publishing house as he had been in earlier years, so Smith's relationship with Gissing were not as close as those he had in his younger days with his more famous authors such as Charlotte Brontë and Mrs Gaskell. Smith still made a point of meeting with all of his authors and called in at Gissing's house in 1886 to invite him to dinner. Gissing attended another dinner party a year later at Smith's house in which Smith recounted his impressions of Charlotte Brontë. Gissing found the Smiths to be '...particularly kind. Of course it is half a policy of business, but there is also some decent human feeling' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 130-131). Of Smith's memory of Brontë, Gissing wrote in his commonplace book: 'In no modern writer have I such intense *personal* interest as in Charlotte Brontë. It has stirred me strangely to hear George Smith speak of his remembrance of her. He hints that he & his mother were the originals of John and Mrs. Bretton in "Villette". But I wish he spoke more reverently' (Gissing, *George Gissing's Commonplace Book* 29).

Gissing's primary contact with Smith, Elder was through James Payn (1830-1898), who was Smith's reader from 1874, editor of the *Cornhill Magazine* from 1883 to

1896, and author of numerous novels, most famously perhaps, *Lost Sir Massingberd* (1864); Payn wrote over 160 books, including 46 novels (Terry 133). The son of a country gentleman, he loathed the traditional rural pastime of hunting and hated his time at Eton and Woolwich Academy. At age 16, he wrote a sketch of life at Woolwich Academy that was published in Dickens's journal *Household Words* and brought him into an acquaintance with Dickens. At Trinity College, Cambridge, he became president of the Union. Unlike Gissing, Payn had no ability with languages, living or dead, preferring 'light literature'. He published two volumes of poems while at Trinity which were favourably reviewed in the *Spectator* and established Payn as an up-coming figure of the world of literature. Immediately upon leaving Cambridge he married Louisa Adelaide Edlin, with the intention of supporting himself and his wife solely by his literary career. He was helped in this by his family's friendship with the poet and dramatist Mary Russell Mitford, and through her, with Thomas de Quincey, Harriet Martineau, and Matthew Arnold. Payn was unlike Jasper Milvain in *New Grub Street* in that he not only had a certain talent but also was blessed with a gentleman's background and contacts. Otherwise Payn could have been Gissing's model for Milvain in that Payn saw himself as 'a businessman engaged in turning out saleable articles according to a successful formula' (Terry 146). George Smith, in his unpublished memoirs, described Payn as:

...a model of literary industry. Literature was his "business", exactly as shares are the business of the stockbroker and teas and sugars the "business" of the merchant. He set himself to earn an income for his family by his pen, and he did it with a method and a diligence altogether admirable. He wrote novels, reviewed books, contributed leading articles to "The Times", "Notes of the Week", to "the Illustrated London News", and charming letters of literary and social gossip to half a hundred newspapers in every part of the empire.

I think Payn could have written very much better books if he had been content to write one novel a year instead of three. He would probably have agreed with that judgment quite frankly but would have added, "My object is to earn an income; and I should not get so much for one first-rate book as I do for three second-rate ones".

Smith did not know what income Payn got for his work, but recounted in his memoirs that one year the company's tax return was audited because, as one of the commissioners explained, they did not know how the profits 'were not larger when we paid one of our employees £3,000 a year'. (Smith, *Recollections*, Chapter XVII, 11-12). At his death he left an estate of £8,367 9s. 5d.<sup>31</sup>

As editor of the *Cornhill*, Payn lightened its content to make it more popular, bringing in novelists like Arthur Conan Doyle and turning down previously-published novelists such as Henry James (Wegener 121). As a reader for Smith, Elder, he was by nature the least appreciative of Gissing's works. Payn saw himself and was seen by his contemporaries as a popular novelist who wrote in whatever manner would please the largest audience. The *Times* obituary noted that Payn 'troubled himself little about the "analysis" of character, or the propagation of the "new" this, that, and the other thing by means of fiction. Psychology and physiology he left to the professors' (*Times*, 26 March 1896: 5). George Smith was well aware of Payn's limits:

Payn had an acute judgment for literature of the lighter order; but he soon got out of his depth and he lacked what may be called intellectual courage. He was afraid of experiments. I don't know how many times I have made him almost jump out of his chair by mentioning sums I proposed to pay for books. The dialogue between us, as reader and publisher, usually ran like this: 'Well, my dear Payn, if the book is all that you say it is worth that or it is worth nothing'. 'Oh, but', Payn would remonstrate, 'I may be mistaken'. Etc. He lacked courage, in a word, to back his judgment, and grew frightened when I backed it too boldly (Smith, *Recollections*, Chapter XVII, 6).

Gissing's first contact with Payn was in 1883, when he submitted some poetry to the *Cornhill Magazine* that was rejected. Gissing later submitted the manuscript of *A Life's Morning*, then titled 'Emily', to Smith, Elder in April 1885 and from that time on Payn would be his contact at Smith, Elder for all the novels he placed with them. Payn seems to have handled all of the negotiations and correspondence; surviving

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<sup>31</sup> Damian Atkinson, 'Payn, James (1830-1898)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [accessed 25 Sept 2004: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21640>]

correspondence between Gissing and Smith, Elder bears only the names of Payn and notations for review by John Aitchinson, the manager of Smith, Elder & Co.

The position of publisher's reader in the late nineteenth century was much like that of a modern book editor. Sutherland makes the point that readers like John Forster and George Meredith not only judged manuscripts for readability but also for suitability to the house and for their sales potential (Sutherland, *Victorian Novelists* 207). Gissing's first meeting with Payn was on 8 December 1885, when Payn accepted *A Life's Morning* for serial publication. Gissing thought nothing of Payn's novels but was impressed that Payn made £3000 a year from them. The relationship between Payn and Gissing was formal and businesslike, even though Gissing found Payn to be 'vastly friendly' and was assured by him that he need 'have no fear whatever of making an income' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 374). Gissing never had the respect for Payn that he had for George Meredith, his reader at Chapman and Hall. *A Life's Morning* was not published until 1888, appearing first in the *Cornhill*, then in book form. Payn apparently forced Gissing to add a happy ending to the novel when he revised it for serial publication (Spiers and Coustillas 61). Payn accepted *Demos* for publication early in 1886 after seeing only the first two volumes and after Gissing assured him that there would be nothing objectionable in the third volume and that it would end happily (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 8). Gissing began to work on *Thyrza*, submitting the first volume to Payn at the end of 1886. Payn turned it down for serialization in the *Cornhill*, because

There is too much of what the vulgar call 'preachment' in it, & I fear Egremont would by some readers be thought priggish. The 'poor' scenes are infinitely the best; indeed some are very good; but even these seem to me to lack the 'go' of *Demos*. I by no means say that we will not publish the novel, but only that it will not suit the *Cornhill*' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 70).

Gissing was of two minds about *Thyrza*, feeling it in many ways his best book to date and yet, from the material he had sent Payn, too weak as well. In either case he was exasperated with Payn, threatening that with 'Ever so little more growling from Payn, &

I shall ask him to let me have the MS. all back again, & offer it to Bentley, -- though I daresay it would not be a wise thing to do, as S. & E. are interested in keeping up my circulation' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 73). When *Thyrza* was published, Gissing was aggrieved to find it listed in Smith, Elder's advertisement in the *Athenaeum* along with a reprint of Payn's *The Heir of the Ages*, a book Gissing called 'the weakest trash of modern times' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 107). In 1895, four years after Gissing had left Smith, Elder for other publishers, Payn wrote a review of *In the Year of Jubilee* for the *Illustrated London News* (26 January 1895 and reprinted in *George Gissing: The Critical Heritage* 236-37). Gissing quoted the piece in a letter to his friend Morley Roberts: "The subjects of his pen are, for the most part, at best genteel, & not so very genteel. -- their lives are not worth living. -- He contrives to interest us in them in spite of ourselves. -- Their views are commonplace & sordid" etc. etc. -- Now, pray tell me: does this give a fair idea of my books taken altogether? I don't think so, but the mischief of it is that this impression is getting fixed in people's minds' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 296). Gissing's excerpt was unkind to Payn. The often-dismal settings of Gissing's books and the unhappy lives of his characters had been commented on by many others before Payn. Payn's review was generous, presenting Gissing as

an author apart; he belongs to no school, and has founded none. He describes human life with the relentlessness of a Zola, but without his uncleanness. ... So far as I remember, he never indulges in humour, nor permits his *dramatis personae* to do so.... Their lives are not worth living, but thanks to the genius he unquestionably possesses they are well worth describing.

Payn went on to praise Gissing's honesty in describing the people he wrote about with accuracy and without apology, in peopling *In the Year of Jubilee* with people who were 'all alive; there are no marionettes, which is fortunate, since there is no dance-music provided for them'.

The documentation at Smith, Elder is the most complete and extensive of any surviving publisher's records concerning George Gissing. The items relating to Gissing

in the Murray Archive consist of Smith, Elder's publication ledger books; a 'Translation' book listing rights for translations (Adele Berger and Gabrielle Fleury for *New Grub Street*, D. Steinhoff and Eve Paul Margueritte for *Thyrza*); reprints (*The Nether World* by Harper, *A Life's Morning* by Lippincott, and the serialisation of *Demos* in the *Manchester Weekly Times*); copies of Gissing's receipts for *New Grub Street*, *Demos*, *The Nether World*; the *Cornhill* publication of *A Life's Morning*; a receipt for the volume publication of *A Life's Morning*; and both receipts for *Thyrza*. There are also the Tauchnitz contracts for reprintings of *Demos* and *New Grub Street* on the continent. The ledgers record the profits and losses for the five Gissing novels during his lifetime from 1885 to 1903 and beyond. Because of the changes brought by events after Gissing's death, such as the 1914-1918 war and the development of new technologies and new media, the ledger accounts in this chapter have not been followed beyond 1904. The ledgers themselves are folio-sized, with costs and sales written on facing pages. Several pages would be allotted to each author's title in each ledger, with accounts continued to following ledgers when the space was used. The double-entry bookkeeping accounts were made to balance on both sides of the ledger at the end of each year. The sales side of the ledger also served as an inventory of stock in hand on 1 January of each year and at 31 December at the end of the year. Smith, Elder's bookkeepers deducted 5% of trade sales for commission fees for their agents. This was deducted from the sales side of the ledger and added to the costs side. In my transcriptions of the ledgers I have only counted it as a cost, so the sales figures given here are for gross sales. Interestingly, for authors who did not sell their copyrights but shared in the profits, a commission was not charged as such but levied as a 5% deduction for bad debts and sundries. Overheads, such as salaries, office expenses, readers' fees, and utilities, were not deducted from the ledgers, but from around 1892, the ledgers begin to show an annual deduction of about 2s for a 'proportion of paper and printing allocated to catalogues',

presumably an attempt to account for part of the overheads.<sup>32</sup> I have not accounted for overheads in calculating profit and loss, but it could run to 20% of any title (Stanley Unwin 343-344). The ledgers that remain are only what Clarence E. Allen, in his 1897 guide to publishing accounting practices, called the ‘publication account’ that summed up the costs and sales. All the more detailed account books, of which Allen counts at least twenty ‘in general use ... recommended’, were not available: the Day Books, Stock Book, Paper and Printing Book, Journal, Invoice Book, etc. (C. Allen 5-6, 21).

Smith, Elder’s normal practice with Gissing’s books, as was common among novel publishers in the period, was to print between 450 and 750 copies of a three-volume edition, almost all of which were sold to the circulating libraries. The three-volume edition had a list price of 33s 6d but was sold to the circulating libraries at 15s and to the trade booksellers at 22s 6d. The first entry in the sales side of the ledgers would state the number of copies on hand, often indicating the publication date. The next entries would list the copies that were given away, namely the five sent to the copyright deposit libraries, the six author’s copies, and the 50 to 70 sent for gifts and review. Sales figures would follow, separated by sales group and further separated by price range. The ledgers would group circulating library sales into three categories and did not itemize sales, except to Mudie’s, the largest single circulating library. The first sales entry was for a group called ‘Subscribers’ that would usually buy sixty copies of the novels at the circulating library price of 15s. The next entry would always be for Mudie, who would generally take at least 100 copies. The next entry was for ‘London Libraries’, which must have comprised sales to W.H. Smith, the Grosvenor Library, where Gissing sometimes had a subscription, and the other circulating libraries in London. The

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<sup>32</sup> Allen recommends that the cost of placing the publisher’s catalogue in what he calls the *Dictionary of Current Literature* be deducted and written off over time, showing a portion of it being charge against a novel in his worked examples. The Dictionary would have been Whitaker’s *Reference Catalogue of Current Literature* (C. Allen 29-30).

London Libraries would buy in a quantity similar to Mudie's. The entry for 'Subscribers' may have been for circulating libraries or other institutions outside London, a practice Bentley followed in their ledgers, grouping circulating library sales into 'Town' and 'Country'. Trade sales were seldom more than a dozen copies. Mudie's and the other circulating libraries were also given additional discounts by the practice of counting every 13 copies sold as 12. If a second printing were made after the initial printing, the publisher would designate it as a second edition. Of Gissing's novels only *New Grub Street* had a 'second edition', i.e. issue, in the three-volume format.

The next true edition was a one-volume crown-octavo edition, which would usually be printed within seven to nine months after the three-volume edition appeared. The text of this edition might be re-written by the author or simply reset from the three-volume edition. *Thyrza* was the only novel Gissing revised for one-volume publication for Smith, Elder. The print run would be between 750 and 2500 copies, half or more of which Smith, Elder usually sold in quires at 1s to Petherick, an Australian publisher and bookseller, for resale in the colonies. The crown-octavo edition retailed at 6 shillings, but was generally sold to the trade at either 4s or 4s 2d, again with the 13 as 12 discount. For *Demos*, *Thyrza*, and *New Grub Street* the higher price on the 6s edition helped to offset the costs of resetting the text and preparing stereotypes for printing this edition and the cheaper issues, a 2s 6d foolscap issue, bound in limp red cloth, and a 2s 'yellowback' issue. Stereotypes were not made for *The Nether World* until the printing of the foolscap issue six months after the crown-octavo edition was printed. Stereotypes were not recorded in the ledgers for *Demos* but they must have been made as the edition was sold for many years and it was unlikely to have been printed from standing type.

The foolscap issue also required the drawing and engraving of illustrations for the yellowback cover and the engraving of blocks for stamping the limp red cloth covers for the 2s 6d edition. The cheap issues sold to the trade generally at several price



points, with effective discount rates of 32% to 38%. The 2s issue was discounted at 1s 1d, 1s 3d, 1s 4d and 1s 5d. The cloth-bound 2s 6d issue was sold at 1s 5d, 1s 8d, and 1s 9d. The 13 as 12 discount was only given to those who purchased at the top range for each issue. Smith did not print 6d books as they regarded them as profitable only for firms that had or controlled a large printing plant, preferring to sell the reprint rights to others for 6d books (Huxley 224). In Gissing's case Smith sold 6d reprint rights in 1909 to *New Grub Street* to George Newnes on a royalty of ½ d per copy on all copies sold up to 25,000 and ¾ d royalty on copies sold above that number (Smith, Elder *Translations Book*). The 2s and 2s 6d issues would appear anywhere from six months to a year and a half after the crown-octavo, except in the case of *A Life's Morning*, which went directly to the foolscap issue nine months after the three-volume edition, probably because it had already appeared in serial form in the *Cornhill*.

Smith, Elder's production costs remained fairly fixed during the period. The cost for binding the three-volume edition was constant at 34s 6d (£1 14s 6d) per hundred copies. Binding the crown-octavo in cloth varied between 33s 6d (£1 13s 6d) and 37s 6d (£1 17s 6d) per hundred copies, a little over 4d a copy. The foolscap issue generally cost from £6 to £6 17s 7d to bind in boards while the cost for binding the 2s 6d issue in cloth varied from 31s 6d (£1 11s 6d) to 34s 4d (£1 13s 4d). The cost of having drawings and engravings made for the yellowback covers was consistent at £6 10s for each novel. The cost of engraving blocks for the limp red covers for the 2s 6d issue was also constant at 8s. Separate costs for composition and stereotyping are difficult to determine as they were usually added together in a single entry along with the cost of paper and printing for the initial printing. Gissing always felt that Smith, Elder never skimped on advertising his books and in keeping his name and novels before the public. They spent a total of £629 0s 5d on advertising on all of his novels up to 1904, including the proportion charged for listing in their catalogues and

individual advertising expenses. They would spend between £60 and £70 on the initial appearance of a new novel, from £17 to £36 on advertising the crown-octavo, and between £16 and £30 on the announcement of the cheap issues. Generally they seem to have allocated a specific percentage to advertising. As a percentage of their total initial costs, advertising would run from 16 percent to 25 percent. Advertising for *Demos* was 21% on all three editions and issues; *Thyrza*'s budget was 25% on the first edition, 18% on the crown-octavo and 24% on the foolscap. Twenty-two percent was spent on the three-volume edition of *A Life's Morning* but only 9% on the cheap edition, probably because it was already well-known from serialization in the *Cornhill*. The budget for *The Nether World* was 18% for the three-volume and foolscap issues and 16% for the crown-octavo. *New Grub Street* had an allocation of 16% on the three-volume and foolscap and 21% on the crown-octavo that appeared soon after the three-volume edition.

In addition to sales of book stock, Smith, Elder sold reprint and translation rights. They would print copies for sales in cheap editions in the colonies and in the case of Gissing's *A Life's Morning*, they sold stereotype plates and printed sheets to J.B. Lippincott in Philadelphia to publish an American edition. Selling advertising in the volumes could also bring in small sums: Smith & Elder did this on occasion with Sell's Advertising Agency.<sup>33</sup> When a publisher decided that a particular edition had no further sales value it could be remaindered for a small sum, recovering perhaps half the cost of producing a volume. The development of the cinema early in the twentieth century could bring additional income from the sale of film rights: Smith, Elder's successors, John Murray, made over £225 on the film rights to *Demos* in the 1920s. Finally, the copyrights, remaining stock, and the stereotypes had a value in themselves and could be sold or transferred, as John Murray did with all of their Gissing titles in 1927.

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<sup>33</sup> Sell's was established in 1869 and advertised Sunlight Soap, Lipton and other major companies. They also published *Sell's Dictionary of the World's Press* (1883-1915).

The novels and rights continued to sell long after Smith, Elder merged with John Murray in 1917. Gissing had sold all of his foreign, domestic, serial and translation rights to Smith, Elder and never received any payments beyond the copyright sale, nor was he even informed by Smith, Elder of the publication of new editions, reprintings in America, or translations. From his correspondence with Payn, Gissing only knew that the sales of the three-volume novels were poor, which, considering the limited market of the three-volume novel did not necessarily mean that the novels were unprofitable to Smith, Elder.

The publication histories of the first three Gissing novels published by Smith, Elder are confusing, as the novels were not published in the order in which the manuscripts were received. Gissing had also placed novels with other publishers at the same time he was publishing with Smith, Elder and those appeared alongside the Smith, Elder publications. After selling *Isabel Clarendon* to Chapman and Hall, publishers of his second novel, *The Unclassed*, Gissing sent Smith, Elder the manuscript for *A Life's Morning* in November 1885 to be published under a pseudonym. Gissing had assumed that because *Isabel Clarendon* was to be published in March 1886, the new novel would have to appear anonymously as it would not do to have competing novels from the same author appear from different publishing houses. In fact, Chapman did not publish *Isabel Clarendon* until June 1886, two months after *Demos* was published. *A Life's Morning* was not published until 1888, so it was Gissing's novel *Demos*, submitted to Smith in January 1886 that appeared anonymously, Smith advertising it in the *Athenaeum* 6 March 1886, while Gissing was still finishing the third volume. *Thyrza*, completed in January 1887 was published in April, followed by *A Life's Morning* in November 1888 after serialization in the *Cornhill* from January to December of that year. The novels following are arranged in their order of publication and not in their order of completion and acceptance.

Because he found a sympathetic reader in George Meredith, Gissing submitted *Isabel Clarendon*, to Chapman in 1885, re-writing it, on Meredith's advice, as a two-volume novel and resubmitting to Chapman in August 1885. In November Chapman offered to publish it immediately on 'half-profits' with a £15 advance to be paid from the profits. Calling Chapman a man not to be trusted, Gissing took his next book, *A Life's Morning*, to Smith, Elder on 5 November 1885, the same day Chapman made his offer. In the event, *Isabel Clarendon* was not published until after *Demos* and Gissing received nothing from it (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 362-364).

*Demos: A Story of English Socialism* was published in three volumes by Smith, Elder in 1886 during a time of social unrest in England. The Trafalgar Square Riot of 8 February 1886 occurred only a month before Gissing was paid £100 for the copyright, while there was a growing interest in socialism as well as a fear of an uprising of 'the mob'. Timing was a part of its success, and, although Gissing was well aware of the sales potential of having it appear amid events portrayed in the novel, he took pains to assure Payn that he was not writing solely to capture popular interest. His letter to Payn of 24 February 1886 made it clear that in accepting the book before its completion he understood 'what an advantage it would be to me to have the help of *actuality* in my subject. I could not forget that I owe you my best work. But I may repeat that I have never considered the book save from an artistic standpoint. Perhaps the events of the day may aid me, but I had far rather they did not aid *too much*' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 9). Gissing received £100 for the sale of the copyright, 'at home and abroad' on 8 March 1886 and the novel went to press on 23 March.

Reviews collected in *George Gissing: The Critical Heritage* (Coustillas and Partridge 79-93) agreed that the timing was right for *Demos* and reviewers generally found it an important and well-written novel. The review in the *Times* (3 April 1886: 5), while finding the treatment of the subject superficial and Gissing's philosophy unsatisfactory,

said 'If a tale of Socialism does not find abundance of readers it is not because the times are not ripe for it. This remarkable novel presents the great social problem in a striking garb'. Some of the reviews concluded that *Demos* was not a story of socialism itself but of its author's despair of any change in the world's fortunes. The *Athenaeum* thought that it would have been better had Gissing's socialists been more appealing or his hero more heroic, but still found it to be a 'really able and vigorous romance'. The *Spectator* called it 'a novel of considerable ability, though it falls short of the highest power. It is evidently written by a man who has a very intimate knowledge of the working classes, and not a little sympathy with them, though his own bias would appear to be aristocratic and aesthetic, rather than democratic and scientific'. The conservative *Scottish Review* found it 'one of the most valuable publications we have seen for a long time...' The reviews helped the sales but did not make it a best seller in the circulating libraries, despite an advertising commitment of almost £70 by Smith, Elder. They printed 750 copies of the three-volume edition and sold 477. They sold 200 copies as 192 to Mudie's, an equal number to the other circulating libraries, and 63 to subscribers, all at 15s. Seventeen copies, an unusually high number, were sold to the trade at 22s 6d. Author's and review copies accounted for another 71 copies and the balance of 202 were remaindered to T. Miles in 1887, 174 in quires at 3 ¾d and 28 in cloth at 1s 1 ½d each. Continental rights were sold to Tauchnitz in May 1886 for £20 and reprint rights were sold to the *Manchester Weekly Times* on 12 July 1889 for £25. There was also a Harper Brothers 1886 edition published in America, paying £10 for it. No payment from Harper for *Demos* was recorded in the ledgers or translation book, but so Gissing was informed when he wrote to Harpers in 1891 (Gissing, *London* 251). Not counting the Harper payment, Smith, Elder made a £47 2s 5d profit on the three-volume edition on total sales of £378 13s 4d.

On 22 November 1886, Smith, Elder printed 1,000 copies of the one-volume, 6s edition and sold a total of 997, selling 508 to the trade at 4s and 4s 2d during 1886 and 1887. In 1888, Smith, Elder sold 422 as 390 at 1s 3d to W.H. Smith, printing a cancel title page with W.H. Smith's imprint, an 1888 date, and Gissing's name added as author. W.H. Smith sold this edition for 3s 6d. Gissing only knew of this when he saw nine copies at a King's Cross newsstand in August 1888 (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 231). The remainder of the edition sold one or two copies a year, leaving three of the thousand unsold at the end of 1901. Despite the reviews and interest in the novel, and Smith, Elder spending £30 initially on advertising and much smaller additional advertising sums each year, sales were poor: Smith lost £69 13s 6d during the first year of sales, made small profits of £18 17s 3d in 1887 and £23 8s 2d in 1888, only to see sales drop off almost completely for this edition. The edition's net loss to 1900/1901 was £25 4s 7d on total sales of £132 4d.

The foolscap issue was printed on 16 May 1888 in two printings, one of 2,000 copies and one of 1,000, with 2,250 bound in boards at the initial printing. Gissing saw a copy with the pictorial boards in June 1888 and hated the sight of it (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 217). The first printing sold 2021 in the first year, returning a profit of £30 4s 2d to Smith, Elder. Additional bindings of 263 and 387 in boards, then 387 in cloth cleared the first printing of 3000 copies. There was a further printing on 26 November 1890, with copies being bound as needed. Another 1,000 were printed on 10 November 1892, and again on 11 January 1898. In all, 6,000 were printed through 1898 and 5,257 sold by the end of 1903. This issue was much more successful, earning Smith, Elder £135 11s 9d on sales of £385 9s 6d to the end of 1903. The net profit on all of the editions of *Demos* amounted to £158 2s 4d over the 17-year period.

The publication of *Thyrza*, one of Gissing's favourite novels, was a source of much anguish and disappointment for him. It was the only novel that he published with

Smith, Elder where he did not initially sell the copyright and instead opted to be paid a royalty. It was also the only novel of his that Smith, Elder published that did not follow the three-volume edition with a timely one-volume edition. It is clear that Smith, Elder preferred to wait on the publication of the one-volume edition until Gissing had assigned them the entire copyright. Gissing's newly discovered correspondence with Smith, Elder and an examination of their ledgers show that Gissing was ill-served by his publishers, who seemed too ready to take advantage of his naïveté and his lack of both emotional and financial resources.

In December 1886 Gissing received a note from Payn apologizing for rejecting *Thyrza* for publication in the *Cornhill*. Gissing assumed that a notation at the top of the note read 'Price £C' (or £100), and, since he had already told Payn he thought the story weak, at least at that point, he resigned himself to getting no more than £100 for it (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 71). Smith, Elder later offered Gissing a choice of either £100 for the purchase of the entire copyright, or £50 and a royalty on the sale of any further printings. Gissing had sold *Demos* outright and he knew that reprints of his novel were selling not only in England but also in Germany and America. While Gissing was in the middle of writing volume one of *Thyrza*, he wrote to his sister Margaret in June of 1886 complaining, 'Ah, if I had some of the money they have made out of "Demos." I sold them the rights both for at home & abroad. I expect it is already pubd. in America' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 40). He resolved to have some of that money on *Thyrza* and wrote to Payn on 16 January 1887, that he would bring them the completed manuscript of *Thyrza* the next day and that he wanted 'to arrange for the publication of "Thyrza" on terms such as I have made in the case of certain other of my books. I wish to sell the first Edn. for a stipulated sum, & to receive a Royalty on each copy sold after the first Edition is exhausted. I shall be glad to receive a proposal on this basis' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 77-88). George Gissing sometimes drew on his brother's training as a

solicitor when he desired legal advice and he turned to him after Smith, Elder made their offer for *Thyrza*. On 5 February 1887, Gissing sent Algernon a letter he had drafted in reply to Smith, Elder's offer, complaining that 'The terms are Hebraic, for 10 p.c. means 4 ½ on the 6/ ed<sup>n</sup>. (taking the selling price to be 4/-). Still, there may be a second 3 Vol. ed<sup>n</sup>., in which case I suppose I should get about 1/6 a copy. And then the future is to be remembered' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 85). Algernon must have urged Gissing to reconsider whatever was in the original letter but we do not know what Algernon advised: perhaps he merely asked Gissing to revise the language of the letter, as Gissing seems to have turned down the original £100 offer in the 5 February letter, saying 'Well, well perhaps I should have done better to get £100 & have done with it. The present terms mean that I shall live in deadly fear of poverty through the rest of the year, ...'. On 7 February Gissing sent another letter to Algernon for review and forwarding to Smith, Elder, asking that he take care to substitute it for the original letter, and apparently resigning himself to *Thyrza*'s failure to be a popular book.

Until now there has been some ambiguity in what Smith, Elder actually offered Gissing for *Thyrza*, although the evidence from many sources shows that Gissing did accept £50 and a 10% royalty. That fact should be clear from Gissing's own 'Account of Books' (reproduced in George Matthew Adams article "Why I Collect George Gissing") in which Gissing records receiving a total of £60 for *Thyrza*, including the £10 Gissing received when he agreed to accept Smith's offer to purchase the remaining rights (Adams, unpagged). The Smith, Elder ledger entry for 26 April 1887 also shows the £50 payment.<sup>34</sup> Gissing's letter to his sister Ellen on March 5 clarifies the offer as he says that 'For the 1<sup>st</sup>. ed. of "Thyrza" (500 copies) I have only got £50, & am to receive

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<sup>34</sup> The Smith, Elder ledgers were in the John Murray collection and are now at the National Library of Scotland. This entry is in volume 24, folio page 302. Future users should be warned that at sometime the ledgers were renumbered, with volume references in the ledgers no longer accurate. I must give warm thanks to the diligence of Virginia Murray, Archivist at John Murray, for her help in locating these missing letters and contracts. At the time I consulted the ledger and papers in the Murray collection they were still in London and were not catalogued.



10% on the selling price of all subsequent copies' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 88).

Despite this evidence, the 1975 edition of Collie's bibliography stated that Gissing was offered a royalty of 15% on each copy sold or an outright sale for £100, with Gissing choosing to sell the novel outright for £100. Michel Ballard's review of Collie's book corrected Collie, noting that Gissing was offered £50 and ten per cent of the sales. The second edition of Collie did correct the option but still had Gissing receiving a 15% royalty payment (Collie, 31). What has been missing up to now is the letter to Smith, Elder that Gissing enclosed in his letter to Algernon on 7 February 1887 and copies of the actual contract and receipts. That letter, along with the original contract and two receipts have now been located in the Smith, Elder papers in the Archive at John Murray, the successor to Smith, Elder.

Although we may never know if there was another offer to Gissing for *Thyrza* or what was in Gissing's original letter to Smith, Elder, the material in the Murray Archives now makes it clear that Gissing was offered £50 for *Thyrza*, with a 10% royalty on the selling price of any copies sold beyond 500. Gissing, as he told Algernon in his 5 February letter, was hoping that a second edition of 250 copies of the three-volume edition would be printed, as was done for *Demos*. The term 'selling price' is not defined: it could mean either the list price or the discounted price to the trade. Since Gissing expected to receive 1s 6d, he must have understood the selling price to mean the discounted trade price, as 1s 6d would be 10% of 15s, the trade price of a 31s 6d novel, while 4 ½ d would be 10% of 6s novel sold separately at 3s 9d, although the usual sale price was 4s 2d, which would have netted Gissing 5d. He would be disappointed in this, and, in fact, thwarted by Smith, Elder in any further gain beyond the nominal offer they would later make for the entire copyright.

The Gissing letter was enclosed within a short wrapper that was imprinted with lines for an identification number ('16/7657'), the date of Gissing's letter, and the date

on which it was answered. The 'Answered' line shows two dates, '9/2/87' crossed out and '15/2/87' inserted. Payn and Aitchinson's names are written below, probably for routing.

7.K. *Cornwall Residences*  
*Regents Park NW*

Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> 1887

Gentlemen,

I must not say that this offer is wholly satisfactory to me; after "Demos", I had thought you would be able to offer me £100 for a first edition of "Thyrza". However, you have doubtless made calculations in accordance with your judgement of the new story, & I am aware that there may be a doubt about how the public will receive "Thyrza". – It must be my care to make this 10 per cent arrangement as profitable to you – & to myself – as may be, by subsequent productions. Whatever be this book's immediate reception, it will not disappoint us hereafter.

I am ready to sign an agreement on the terms you suggest. It may be needless to mention it, but I should like to receive your assurance that the book will be speedily published.

Something I would add: It is my belief that "Thyrza" would be benefited by having my name attached to it. I could in that case address both the public already familiar with my name, & that other which knows me only as "Author of Demos". The reviews of my book "Isabel Clarendon" in the *Spectator* a short time ago [23 October 1886: 1420] sufficiently proved (if I did not know it in other ways,) that my signed work has got for itself a certain recognition, which should certainly increase the market value of what I now write.

Will you let me have your opinion on this point? I am Gentlemen, yours faithfully,

George Gissing

Mssrs. Smith, Elder & Co.

The original contract follows:

Memorandum of Agreement made the fifteenth day of February 1887 between George Gissing Esq of 7K Cornwall Residences, Regents Park, London N.W. and Messrs Smith, Elder & Co. of 15 Waterloo Place, London, S.W.

Mr George Gissing having written a novel entitled "Thyrza" hereby agrees to sell to Messrs. Smith Elder & Co. the right to print and publish the work on the following conditions.

I. Messrs. Smith Elder & Co are to pay to Mr Gissing the sum of fifty pounds (£50.0.0) on the publication of the work.

II. In the event of the first edition of the five hundred copies being exhausted, Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co are to pay Mr Gissing a Royalty of ten per cent. on the selling price of all copies sold beyond that number.

George Gissing

Also in the Archives were the following stamped receipts, the 1887 receipt in Gissing's handwriting and the second a printed form signed by Gissing:

Ap. 27 1887

Received of Messrs Smith, Elder & Co. the sum of Fifty pounds, being payment complete for the first edition (of five hundred copies) of my novel "Thyrza".

George Gissing

27-4-1887

London, January 9<sup>th</sup> 1891

Received of Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. the sum of ten pounds in payment for the entire copyright at home and abroad, of 'Thyrza' – which is hereby assigned to them.

£10.0.0

George Gissing

The Smith, Elder ledgers record that 500 copies of the three-volume edition of *Thyrza* were printed on 26 April 1887. Forty-three were sent to 'editors & friends' for review, six given to Gissing, and five sent to 'public libraries' for copyright deposit. A total of 444 copies were sold: sixty were sold to 'Subscribers' at 15s, Mudie took 175 copies discounted as 168 at 15s, 166 were sold as 160 to 'London Libraries' at 15s, and six were sold to the book trade, one at 18s and five at the standard 22s 6d. In 1888, thirty copies were remaindered to T. Miles & Co. for £3 7s 6 (or 2s 3d per copy, well below the 6s 6d cost per copy), two were sold to 'London Libraries' for the standard 15s, five were sold to the trade at 22s 6d; and one was given 'to friends'. The remaining copy was given to Gissing in 1889. There were no attempts to print a second three-volume edition or to print a cheap edition until after Gissing had sold his entire copyright to them four years later, on 9 January 1891. This was quite contrary to Smith, Elder's normal practice with Gissing's novels, in which a cheap edition was issued within eight or nine months of the three-volume edition.<sup>35</sup> The three-volume sales

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<sup>35</sup> On 23 March 1886 Smith, Elder printed 750 copies of *Demos*, selling 480 by the end of the year and printing 1000 copies of the 6s crown-octavo edition on 22 November 1886. On 12 November 1888 Smith, Elder printed 500 copies of *A Life's Morning* and had sold only 332 by the end of the year. In August 1889, they printed 2000 copies of the one-volume, 2 s and 2s 6d edition. On 1 April 1889 Smith,

figure of *Thyrza* was not an anomaly, but its delay in being reissued in another edition was.

While the *Times* reviewer found ‘much that was striking’ in *Thyrza* he also found much that was wrong with it, particularly the presence of too many characters and what the reviewer felt to be the unrealistic character of *Thyrza* herself (*Times*, ‘Recent Novels’ 21 May 1887:17). The writer of the unsigned review in the *Whitehall Review* of 12 May 1887 had a suspicion that ‘George Gissing’ was a pseudonym and the writer a woman, but also said that, whoever George Gissing was ‘We have few novelists of the present day who outrival him in quiet power and intensity, or who can approach his perfectly level method of thought and feeling’ (Partridge and Coustillas 105). The journalist W.T. Stead’s unsigned review in George Smith’s *Pall Mall Gazette* praised Gissing’s earlier novels while criticizing Gissing’s loss of hope in the advancement of the working class as shown in *Demos* and *Thyrza*. There was nothing in the review that would have seriously affected sales, but in November 1887 Gissing wrote Algernon that there was ‘no hope’ of a second edition of *Thyrza* (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 161).

Three years after the publication of *Thyrza*, and considering its sales a failure, Gissing asked Smith, Elder if they would consider buying the copyright. They made their first offer in August 1890, but Gissing declined to take their initial offer, ‘as the prospect of a cheap edition is so little encouraging’ and he preferred to complete *New Grub Street* (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 229). Finally, on 7 January 1891, Gissing accepted Smith, Elder’s offer of £150 for *New Grub Street* and their offer of £10 for *Thyrza*, asking that ‘When you think of a cheap edition, kindly let me have notice, for I

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Elder printed 500 copies of *The Nether World* and sold 371 by the end of the year. On 3 December 1889 they printed 750 copies of the 6s crown-octavo edition. *New Grub Street* had a first printing on 3 April 1891 of 500 copies, followed on 15 May by a second printing of 250 more copies. The first edition sold 447 copies, with further sales of the three-volume edition effectively killed by the printing of 750 copies of the one-volume edition on 30 October 1891, six months after the first edition appeared. None of Gissing’s books sold 500 copies in their first edition, but few novels would induce the circulating libraries to take more than 400, in part because of the quick re-issue of them in six-shilling formats.

should wish thoroughly to revise the book, & to shorten it somewhat. It *ought* to have something like a popular sale in a cheap edition, when a few superfluities have been cut away' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 253). Gissing did make extensive revisions to the text, receiving a copy from Smith, Elder on 31 January 1891 and remarking in his diary that he 'knew the cheap edn. would not be long delayed after the copyright came into their hands (Gissing, *London* 238). He returned the revised copy to them on 7 February noting that the revisions and deletions were considerable and requesting to see proofs before the new edition appeared (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 268-70).

On 9 June 1891, six months after acquiring the entire copyright to *Thyrza*, and with Gissing's revisions, Smith, Elder printed 750 copies of the 6s crown-octavo edition and 1,000 copies of a colonial edition, followed a year later by an issue of 3,000 copies of the 2s and 2s 6d pence editions, reprinting them again in 1895 in an issue of 1,000 copies. They also sold translation rights in August 1891 for £5 to 'D. Steinhoff, Baden-Baden' but, as far as is known, this translation did not appear.

The one-volume edition of *Thyrza* was printed only two months after the April publication of *New Grub Street* and sold poorly, losing money for Smith, Elder. They would make up for it on the 2s and 2s 6d issues issued a year later. Had Gissing been entitled to his 10%, his own earnings through 1904 would have brought him £14 18s 6d on the crown- octavo and £25 0s 6d on the cheap issues, or almost £40 for the novel, with most of the income coming during the first printings of the novels in their cheap format. Smith, Elder made over £82 on *Thyrza*. Had Gissing accepted the £100, or had he been paid a royalty, their bottom line would not have changed substantially but by deliberately withholding publication until they could secure the entire copyright, Smith, Elder enjoyed the modest profit that would have gone to Gissing.

Gissing should have taken the £100 offer, but he was willing to take a chance on a royalty, a method of payment that was then less common in British publishing and

that he hoped would have provided him with a future income. In a letter to his friend Bertz in 1893, Gissing regretted that he lacked ‘the courage and foresight to refuse to sell’ his novels ‘out & out’ to Smith, Elder (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 148). His future contracts, negotiated by professional agents, would secure better returns. Who at Smith, Elder made the decision to withhold printing more copies of *Thyrza* we shall never know. In the end, the financial loss to Gissing was probably not as great as the feeling he had that Smith, Elder had treated him badly. Surprisingly, it was not their dishonesty in handling *Thyrza* that angered Gissing as much as their deprecating offer for *Born in Exile* after the success of *New Grub Street*. Still, *Thyrza* rankled him; reading the obituaries on George Smith’s death in 1901 that praised Smith’s generosity, Gissing would wryly recall *Thyrza* and his shameful treatment by Smith, Elder (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IX, 304). Perhaps they may be seen like the publisher in Frank Swinnerton’s autobiography, who, when accused of cheating a novelist said ‘Oh, swindling; that’s a very strong word. I admit it was sharp practice’. As Swinnerton says, it is a subtle distinction and assumes the author is a natural pigeon (Swinnerton 54).

Gissing sent the manuscript of *A Life’s Morning* to Smith, Elder in November 1885, just before beginning *Demos*. Writing to his sister Ellen on 4 November he told her, ‘in confidence’ that “Emily” (the novel’s original title) had been sent to Smith, Elder under the pseudonym of Osmond Waymark, the name of the hero in his most recent novel *The Unclassed*. Gissing felt that “Emily” is rather poor, & ten to one I shall not sell it. But I shall try hard. Chapman will make me his offer tomorrow; I fear it will be only be £20 or so. But I have talked to him very urgently, & I hope he may have decent feeling. Tomorrow I begin my new book, which will be called “Demos.” Alas, it must be three vols’ (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 362 – 363).<sup>36</sup> Payn accepted it in on 8

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<sup>36</sup> In his letter to Ellen dated 4 November 1885 Gissing says the book has been dispatched to Smith but in his letter of 5 November to Algernon he says he had sent it on that day.

December, offering Gissing £50 with another £50 promised if they serialized the novel in the *Cornhill*, a decision that Payn wanted to postpone for at least two months. The receipt, dated 30<sup>th</sup> December 1885 with the tax stamp and Gissing's signature dated 31 December, was for 'the sum of fifty pounds in payment for the entire copyright, at home and abroad, of "Emily" which is hereby assigned to them. It is understood that in the event of Messrs Smith Elder & Co publishing the story in the "Cornhill Magazine" they are to pay me a further sum of fifty pounds (£50.0.0)' (Murray Archives). It would be two years before *A Life's Morning* would be published, appearing not in volume form but as a serial in the *Cornhill*, running from January to December 1888. Gissing had a letter from Payn in November 1887 offering to run it as a serial but asking that the title be changed. Gissing told Algernon that the note had 'Immediate' written on the envelope and he suspected that Payn had run short of a serial for the *Cornhill* and approached him at the last minute. Gissing was going to change the title from 'Emily to 'Her Will and Her Way' but Algernon warned him that a novel with a similar name already existed.<sup>37</sup> Gissing changed it to 'The Morning of Her Life', then to 'A Life's Morning' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 158, 161). There is a receipt from Gissing in the Murray Archives dated 30 December 1887, for £50, 'being the second & final payment for the copyright of my story called originally "Emily", subsequently "A Life's Morning"'. The cheque for the novel arrived in Gissing's mail on the 31<sup>st</sup> while he was already correcting the proofs of the March 1888 appearance of *A Life's Morning* in the *Cornhill* (Gissing, *London* 17). The novel did not go to print until the serial was about to end. The ledger entry for 12 November 1888 shows a payment of £25 'To the proportion of amount paid Author for Copyright'. The other £25 of the copyright payment is not recorded in the ledgers, possibly because almost a year had passed after it was paid.

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<sup>37</sup> Lady Georgina Charlotte Fullerton, *A Will and a Way*, (London: Bentley & Son, 1881).

The three-volume edition was advertised for publication on 15 November 1888. Gissing was in Paris when he saw the advertisement and was surprised as he had written it to be in two volumes (Gissing, *London* 58). Five hundred copies were printed and 450 bound. The one-volume edition was prepared and stereotyped at the same time as the three-volume edition. An entry in the Smith, Elder translation book for 5 October 1888 records a payment of £60 from the American publishers Lippincott for early sheets and stereotypes of the one-volume edition so that it could be published simultaneously with the British edition. Of the three-volume edition 332 copies were sold, Mudie's taking 126 and the other circulating libraries taking 139. Sixty went to subscribers and six to the trade. Another six copies were sold in the next year to the circulating libraries, and the remaining 117 copies of the edition were remaindered in 1890 to T. Miles, 50 in quires at 10d and 67 in cloth at 1s 7d. According to their ledgers Smith, Elder made £109 3d on the total sales of £314 5s 9d. If the other £25 of the copyright were deducted their profit was £84 3d.

Probably because of its previous appearance as a serial, *A Life's Morning* bypassed the crown-octavo format and appeared directly in a 2s 6d and 2s edition in August 1889. Two thousand copies were printed on 12 August and bound in boards, although the ledger erroneously indicates a cloth binding.<sup>38</sup> Most of this edition was sold within the year, with 182 copies sold as 168 at 1s 3d, 92 sold as 85 at 1s 4d, and 1,574 sold as 1,453 at 1s 5d. Another 1,000 were printed on 9 September and for this edition, engravers' blocks were made and 300 copies were bound in cloth. Smith, Elder received a small amount from Sell's Advertising Agency for placing advertising in the copies that they bound in boards. Sell's paid at the rate of 40s per 1,000 copies and the ledgers show that Smith, Elder printed advertisements in 250 copies in 1890 and

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<sup>38</sup> This binding had to be in boards as the amount charged, £6 per thousand, was the cost of binding in boards, and the blocks for stamping the cloth binding would not be made until the next year.



another 250 in 1891. Only one payment from Sell's is recorded in 1890, for 10s. Another 1,000 copies were printed on 26 July 1892 and copies were bound in boards or cloth as needed. A total of 3,896 copies were sold through 1904, 2,609 in boards and 1,352 in cloth. Smith, Elder made a profit of £54 13s 3d on sales of £269 14s 4d. Their net gain from both editions of *A Life's Morning* was £163 13s 6d, or £138 13s 6d with the full £50 payment for the volume rights deducted, compared to the £100 Gissing had received for both the serial and book rights.

On 29 February 1888, while on holiday in Eastbourne, Gissing received a telegram that his wife, Nell Harrison, had died in Lambeth. Gissing returned to London that evening and the next morning, with his friend Morley Roberts, went immediately to her squalid, almost barren room, where her body lay on the bed. Gissing had not seen her since their separation in 1885 and could scarcely recognize her. Gissing wrote in his diary that 'As I stood by that bed, I felt my life henceforth had a firmer purpose. Henceforth I never cease to bear testimony against the accursed social order that brings about things of this kind. I feel that she will help me more in her death than she balked me during her life. Poor, poor thing!' (Gissing, *London* 23). On 19 March Gissing began writing *The Nether World*, in which he would realistically display the living hell of London's poor. He worked steadily on it, writing four or more pages a day and researching the novel's background in Clerkenwell. He finished the novel on 22 July and left the manuscript with Payn on 23 July, having written to Smith, Elder on the 19 July that he wanted it to appear before the volume publication of *A Life's Morning*. Gissing was aware that Payn would be away during August but Gissing was still annoyed with Payn for delaying his acceptance of the novel until October, especially as Gissing was feeling financially pressed and had plans to leave for France and Italy in September. He was in Paris when Smith, Elder made him an offer of £150 for *The Nether World*, the most he had ever received for a novel. They apparently prefaced the letter by telling him

of the ‘disappointing’ sales of *Thyrza*. In his reply to them on 3 October Gissing hoped that the cheap editions of *Demos* were selling and keeping people aware of his existence. He again mentioned that he would prefer that *The Nether World* appear before *A Life’s Morning*, especially since Algernon had recently published *Joy Cometh in the Morning* with Hurst & Blackett and Gissing was afraid that the public would be confused by the similarity of the titles and authors of the two books<sup>39</sup>. The receipt for *The Nether World* is dated 9 October 1888. Unlike previous receipts this one is printed but with the phrase ‘at home and abroad, including the United States of America’ added by hand. Later receipts would have ‘at home and abroad’ printed, and amendments such as ‘including the United States of America’ written in before the title. Gissing corrected the proofs while he was in Italy in January and February 1889, finishing the proofs to the end of volume II on February 22. On the 24<sup>th</sup> he sent to the printers a quote that he had just read in *Figaro* from the French historian Ernest Renan’s speech at a reception for the dramatist Jules Clarétie at the Académie Française: ‘*La peinture d’un fumier peut être justifiée pourvu qu’il pousse une belle fleur; sans cela, le fumier n’est que repoussant*’ (‘The painting of a manure pile is perhaps justified provided a flower grows there; without it, the manure is only repulsive’.) It appeared as the motto on the title page and was quoted in reviews. The proofs were finished on 4 March after Gissing returned to London. The book was published on 3 April 1889, with the printing entry in the ledger dated 1 April 1889.

Reviews of *The Nether World* were somewhat mixed as the subject matter, daily life among the poor of London, may have been more suited to a social study than to a romance. The *Court Journal* (27 April 1889: 500) compared Gissing to Dickens and the *Guardian* review (29 May 1889, xlv(1): 845), while finding the minor characters more interesting than the major, and the book too diffuse, overall found the ‘characters so

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<sup>39</sup> On 9 March Gissing heard from Algernon that Hurst & Blackett had sent him an accounting that showed sales of 329 copies and enclosed a cheque for £15.

real that interest never flags'. The usual 500 copies of the three-volume edition were printed at a cost of £85 18s 11d and 450 copies bound. Five were sent to the copyright deposit libraries, six to Gissing, 39 to editors and friends, and one copy in quires was sent to the American publisher, Appleton. Subscribers bought 63 copies, Mudie's took 138 as 132, the London libraries bought 163 as 157, and seven were sold to the trade. One additional copy was sold to the trade in 1890 at 22s 6d (£1 2s 6d) and the remaining copies were remaindered to T. Miles in 1891, 49 in quires at 10d and 28 in cloth at 1s 7d. Harper Brothers in America paid £15 for the rights to reprint the novel in their Franklin Square Library in 1889, where it sold for 45 cents, or approximately 2s. This was the first Gissing three-volume novel on which Smith, Elder lost money, the sale of 372 copies leaving them with a substantial net loss of £44 18s 10d on sales of £286 17s 6d. They recovered only a little over £1 in 1890 and the final remainder sale of £4 5s 2d left them with an overall loss of the library edition of £39 12s 4d.

On 3 December 1889, Smith, Elder printed 750 copies of the crown-octavo edition, binding 600 copies. They also printed a four-page introduction to the novel that was added only to the printing of a 1,500 copy colonial edition that was sold in quires to Petherick and issued by them with an 1890 imprint. The introduction, signed only 'P.R.', is reprinted in Coustillas and Partridge *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, where the editors note that Gissing was never informed by Smith, Elder of its existence. The crown-octavo edition had meagre sales of 470 as 434 at 4s 2d and the 1,500 to Petherick at 1s each. It sold another 163 copies in 1890 and then only occasional volumes until 1903 when two were sold to the trade and Boots purchased the remaining 14 at 9d. The overall profit for the edition was £70 6s 7d, with £63 2s 7d of the total earned during the first two years.

The printing for the foolscap issue is recorded for 18 June 1890. Stereotyping, paper and printing 2,500 copies cost £82 2s 1d, followed by another printing of 2,000

copies on 25 September for £27 19s 3d. Smith, Elder printed 4,250 paper covers for the 2s issue. They again sold advertising to Sell's and printed and bound advertising into 2,350 copies in boards. Another 300 copies were bound in red cloth. Petherick took 500 at 1s 1d each. Sell's, as seemed to be their practice, bought three at 8d and paid £4 14s for the advertising. Trade sales for the 2s issue were 176 as 163 at 1s 3d, 35 as 33 at 1s 4d, and 1506 as 1391 at 1s 5d. A little over half of the cloth-bound copies were sold, 54 as 50 at 1s 7d, nine at 1s 8d, and 101 as 94 at 1s 9d. Printing, engraving, binding, and commission were barely offset by sales, returning only £6 1s 4d at the end of 1890. Sales continued to be slow, but by the summer of 1903 only 25 copies of the 1890 printing remained and an additional 500 copies were printed on 21 August. Despite the slow sales, over the 13 years from its publication to 1903 the foolscap issue returned a profit of £102 3s 6d on total sales of £317 16s 5d. Although over £155 of that total came from first-year sales, the novel did return annual sales of over £10 for seven of its 15 years. The crown-octavo and foolscap sales gave Smith, Elder a net gain for the title of £132 17s 6d, compared to Gissing's £150 payment.

After returning from his five-month trip to France and Italy, Gissing wrote *The Emancipated*, a novel set in Naples that showed the aesthetic awakening of a cold, devoutly religious Yorkshire woman after exposure to the beauties of classical culture. Begun 24 March 1889, it was finished on 13 August, 'ten weeks and one day' of quick work (Gissing, *London* 159). On the 20<sup>th</sup>, Gissing took it to Bentley instead of Smith, Elder because he was 'curious to see (1) if he will accept it at all, (2) what he will offer for it, if he does accept.' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 107) and also because Bentley had earlier paid Gissing for *Mrs Grundy's Enemies*, a novel Bentley had accepted but later withdrew from publication. As Gissing explained to Edith Sichel

I daresay my old publishers, Smith & Elder, will wonder why I have abandoned them & gone to Bentley. It is partly because I wished to see whether I could not get enough money for the book to put my mind at rest for twelve months, (a

gross motive, you will say,) & partly because I have really owed Bentley a book for some years. Long ago he purchased a MS. from me, & at the last moment (even after announcing the book) was afraid to publish it. It dealt with base life, & was likely to prove offensive to our good public.' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 138).

*The Emancipated* was published on 22 March 1890 but had only sold 492 copies by June 1891. Gissing had received £150 from Bentley and the promise of another £50 if sales reached 850 copies, with another £50 if they sold 1,000 copies (Spiers and Coustillas 70). The cheque from Bentley enabled Gissing to go to Greece for three months. On his return he struggled with and abandoned three other novels, before starting what would become *New Grub Street* in October. Smith, Elder accepted the novel in January 1891, finding it 'very clever & original, but we fear that the prevailing melancholy' will not make it a popular novel (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 254). They offered £150. Gissing wrote back accepting and asking for £10 for the entire copyright for *Thyrza*. He received the cheque for *New Grub Street* the next day and the cheque for *Thyrza* a day later (Gissing, *London* 235). The receipt, dated 8 January, assigned the entire copyright, 'at home and abroad' and, written in above the title, 'including the United States of America.' Gissing wrote to Bertz that in being offered the same amount as he had been offered for his last two books he was making no advance in his career.

The ledger entry for 3 April 1891 shows a charge of £100 5d for the costs of composing 30 and three-quarter sheets of 32-page crown-octavo and paper and printing for 500 copies. The total number of deposit, author, review and commercial sale copies was 514 copies, necessitating another printing on 15 May of 250 copies, adding £24 11s 9d to the production costs. The novel was published on 7 April. A total of 525 copies were bound and £60 7s 3d was spent on advertising. A total of 66 copies were given away for deposit, author's copies, and review copies. Mudie's bought 202 as 194, the most they had yet bought of any Gissing title, subscribers bought 57, and the other circulating libraries bought 188 as 182. Total sales were 447. The edition was carried on

the books until 1898, without any further sales. One copy was given away in 1895 and at the end of 1897 there were 225 in quires and 12 remaining in cloth. There is no record in the ledger of those copies being remaindered. Reprinting rights were sold to Tauchnitz for £30 and translation rights were sold for £8 to Adele Berger in Austria on 21 November 1891 for a German translation.<sup>40</sup> The three-volume edition was not successful and Smith, Elder lost £16 12s 4d on sales of £362 15s. Although it was certainly talked about and even debated in the pages of *The Author*, the journal of the Society of Authors, with Walter Besant defending it and Andrew Lang condemning it (and Gissing thinking that neither of them understood the novel at all), even the most favourable reviews described it as morbid, gloomy, and as a 'long, desolate tragedy' (*Whitehall Review*, 18 April 1891: 19-20, reprinted in Partridge and Coustillas 169). Perhaps Smith, Elder should have heeded L. F. Austin's review in the *Illustrated London News* (2 May 1891, 571): 'But, Gloomy as this book is, the very grimness of its hostility to common illusions is refreshment to the jaded reader of the average novel. There is power in every line. ... But will Mr Mudie's subscribers relish the process?'

Even though Gissing was happy that a 'second edition' of *New Grub Street* was printed, 'The first time I have ever achieved this', the book did not sell as well or as profitably as *Demos*, which had an initial printing of 750 copies and sold 477 copies, a difference of 30 more copies, and earned Smith, Elder almost £46. The difference between the two was partly in the cheaper printing costs: printing 750 copies of *New Grub Street* in two printings cost £124 12s 2d opposed to the single 750-copy printing of *Demos* at £109 11s 3d, and partly, of course, because Gissing was paid another £50 above what he received for *Demos*. The three-volume edition also lost money because the publishers may have not been enthusiastic enough about it, having lost money on

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<sup>40</sup> According to the editors of the *Letters*, it was published in serial form as 'Ein Mann des Tages' in the newspaper *Pester Lloyd* in Budapest from 29 December to 30 April (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 10). The editors did not see the ledger or translation book entry.

*The Nether World*, and made too small an initial printing. The printing of the 6s edition six weeks after the second printing of the three-volume edition was also certain to kill further sales with the libraries. Finally, the appearance of the 6s edition of *Thyrza*, sent to the printers less than a month (9 June) after the second printing of *New Grub Street* also competed with the new novel.

On 25 June 1891, the colonial edition of 1,500 copies was printed for E.A. Petherick and sold to him in quires at 1s each. The crown-octavo edition for domestic sale was entered on 20 October with a charge of £88 18s 6d for composing, stereotyping, and paper and printing for 750 copies. Again, sales were poor, with only 256 sold as 237 at 4s at a trade sale (trade sales were given to favoured customers at a greater discount) and an additional 239 sold as 221 for 4s 2d. Smith, Elder lost almost £4 on this edition and, over the 6s edition's entire life only made £7 18s 5d. The edition was exhausted in 1904 when W.H. Smith bought 92 copies at 8d, 13 were sold at 9d to Geamin and Drayton, one was given away, and one set aside for an office copy.

The foolscap issue enjoyed much better sales when it appeared in 1892. An initial printing of 2,500 copies costing £42 4s 11d was entered in the ledger for 18 July 1892. Two thousand copies were bound in boards and 450 in red cloth. Almost 2,000 copies were sold in the first year, including 507 at 1s 1d and 1395 as 1,288 at 1s 5d. Profits on the first year of this issue were £52 18s 4d on sales of £152 4s 6d, including £4 for the sale of advertisements bound into 2,000 copies. Smith, Elder would suffer a £31 5s loss the next year when they went back to press for an additional 2,000 copies but sales throughout the next ten years were steady, averaging 165 copies a year. In all 2,411 were sold in boards and 1,767 in cloth, netting a total profit of £112 13s 3d. The 1903 entry records 248 in quires on hand, 43 in boards, and 22 in cloth. A note in the Murray archives dated 17 February 1920 shows the other editions out of print and a remaining stock of 6 copies of the 2s 6d issue, with a reminder that the plates for the 6s

and 2s 6d issue were at Spottiswoode, Smith, Elder's printers. The net profits to Smith, Elder through 1903 were £103 19s 4d on all of the editions. As noted above, Smith, Elder did not print 6d books, but sold the rights to others. An entry in the translation books and a confirming telegram in the Murray archives from George Newnes shows that Smith, Elder sold the rights to reprint a 6d issue of *New Grub Street* to Newnes in 1909. Newnes was to print 25,000 copies and pay Smith, Elder one halfpenny per copy sold, increasing the royalty to ¾ d on copies sold above 25,000. A letter from Newnes dated 8 January 1917 thanks Smith, Elder for agreeing to a reduction in the royalty for the duration of the war.

There was another important event tied to the publication of *New Grub Street* and that was the meeting between Gissing and the woman who would become his third wife. On 23 June 1898, Gissing had a letter from Gabrielle Fleury asking to purchase the rights to do a French translation of *New Grub Street*. Gissing replied to her, writing in English and apologizing for not having sufficient practice in writing or speaking French, and informing her that his literary agent (William Morris Colles) had told him that Georges Art was 'about to undertake' a translation of *New Grub Street* and advising her to contact Smith, Elder. He also welcomed her to pay him a visit in Dorking, where he was currently living. She did visit on the 26th of July and the next day he wrote to her that he 'should wish to have you near me always.' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 106, 120).

The Smith, Elder ledgers show a payment for translation of £10 10s on 21 October 1898. The Translation Book notes that 'Miss Edith Fleury (E.F. d'Arzinol) per Major WA St Clair RE, Stillorgan Co Dublin had purchased the rights at £5 5s and another £5 5s on publication, 'recd 25 Feby 1901 from Miss d'Arzinol'.<sup>41</sup> Gissing

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<sup>41</sup> Gabrielle used the pseudonym 'E.F. d'Arzinol' in her writings. William St. Clair was married to a cousin of Gabrielle's. See *The Letters of George Gissing to Gabrielle Fleury*, 85 and *Letters* VII, xxx and VIII, 394.



would revise this edition and it was published under the title of 'La Rue des Meurt-de-Faim' as a serial in the *Journal des Debats* from 23 February to 3 June 1901 and as a book by Editions de la Revue Blanche in 1902.

*New Grub Street* would be the last Gissing book Smith, Elder would publish. The break came because of the strained relations between Gissing and Payn, and Gissing's feeling that he was worth more than Smith, Elder were offering him. In March 1891, while working on the the manuscript of his next book, *Born in Exile*, then titled 'Godwin Peak', Gissing wrote to Bertz that he felt he was right to remain with Smith as 'He has a solid commercial interest in my books, & he advertizes them well. I shall never again willingly leave him'. (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 275 – 276). Gissing was encouraged by the reviews of *New Grub Street* and wrote to Bertz on 15 May that "New Grub Street" seems to be more like a literary success than any other of my books. ... Not only am I well reviewed, but positive articles are devoted to the book. There was one occupying a whole column the other day in the *Illustd. London News*. Then, I have just been casually referred to in a *leader* in the *Daily News* – which means a good deal. We shall see whether all this has any financial results – to the publishers. Dash it all! I ought to get more than £150 for my next book'. He mentioned the same articles to Algernon, adding 'If this kind of thing ought to increase one's market value. If not, when is the increase to begin? I shall await with curiosity Smith's next offer'. (Gissing, *Collected Letters*, IV 294, 297). On 20 July 1891 he sent the manuscript to Smith, Elder asking £250 for the English and American copyright, the latter item included because of the recent passage of an American copyright bill that would be favourable to British authors and publishers. He had already written to Harpers in America to see what they had paid Smith, Elder for reprint rights. Because of the disappointing sales of *New Grub Street* Payn refused to pay £250. Gissing wrote to Payn on 7 August 1891:

Dear Mr. Payn,

I must not argue the point of price, for I know nothing of the conditions which determine it, but it seems to me a most astonishing thing that a book from my hands at the present day should be worth only fifty pounds more than 'Demos' some years ago.

By reserving the American copyright I gain nothing, for it is not in my power to conduct the business necessary for disposing of that right; whereas I should have thought that Messrs. Smith & Elder could, in the ordinary course of business relations, have disposed of the book in America for payment not altogether insignificant, --payment which would at all events have increased the sum hitherto offered to the author.

However, I must reply to the statements of your letter.

Is my chance of receiving £150 (even) dependent upon your opinion of the book when you have finished its perusal? If so, -- if it is *possible* that in, say, two months' time a sum less than £150 may be offered me, then I fear I have no option, & must needs withdraw the MS. at once. This I am sure you will understand; with very little delay I could get that sum for the novel. On the other hand, if Messrs. Smith & Elder will purchase 'Godwin Peak' for £150--well, I shall accept it. Such a necessity amazes me; I could not have foreseen it, & am only reconciled to it by your statement that 'New Grub Street' has been a financial failure.

All this is very informal; I write to you as one man of letters to another. And to pursue the same tone, I will add that, after this, it will no doubt be better for me to put my affairs in the hands of Watt, or some such man. I should then reap the odds & ends of profit which I must now perforce neglect. I am not set on making money, but I must not forget that only with the help of money can one's artistic powers be developed.

Will you then, kindly let me know whether Messrs. Smith, Elder will give £150 for this book? If that is to be uncertain, even for a month's time, I have absolutely no choice but to write for the MS. Possibly I ought not to give you the trouble of answering this question; if you had rather I wrote to the firm about it, please let me have a note to that effect. (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 314)

On 9 August Gissing wrote in his diary that he had a letter from Payn returning the manuscript, 'Saying that if I like to send it back in a month's time, he will then finish it, but could not advise Smith to give more than £150. Adds that my 'pessimism' is the cause of my failure. Forthwith wrote to A.P. Watt, the literary agent, asking if he would do business for me'. (Gissing, *London* 253). Gissing then wrote a letter in reply to Payn on 10 August 1891:

Thank you; in writing thus privately to me about the prospects of the MS. you have done me a kindness.

I cannot expect my publishers to have as much faith in the future of my books as I have myself. From my point of view, it is by no means the immediate *library*

sale that has mainly to be taken into account. The purchase of a copyright means property during a long series of years, & a few years hence my novels will sell much better than they do to-day. But this is speculation, & everyone is justified in declining to speculate.

To alter with deliberation the whole spirit of my work would be to court & merit failure. I take no credit to myself for preferring present poverty to the certainty of a hopeless failure if I tried to write otherwise. The Continental novelists have gained their public by persistence in self-development; I must try to win the same end by the same course. *But* “those who live to please must please to live,” & I am sure you will think me justified in going to find what this MS. will fetch in the open market. (Gissing, *Collected Letters*, IV 315).

The next day Gissing sent the manuscript to A.P. Watt, a literary agent whose clients included Wilkie Collins and Walter Besant. Gissing had read Watt’s promotional booklet of testimonial letters from his authors and had sent a copy of it to Algernon on 29 April 1891 along with a copy of *New Grub Street*. Watt first took the manuscript of *Born in Exile* to Chatto & Windus. After they refused to offer no more than £120, Watt took it to Longman and then to Bentley, without success. It was finally sold to A.C. Black for £150. Although the editors of the *Letters* suspect collusion among the publishers to refuse to make an offer above £150, there really is no evidence that the sales of any of Gissing’s novels up to that time would warrant a larger payment (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, xxxi). It was unlikely to have been a plot by a cartel of publishers but simply reflected the unfortunate economic reality of publishing: authors were not paid for their literary merit but for their sales to a public that wanted entertainment above all, something that James Payn and Jasper Milvain well understood.

Now an established novelist, Gissing had attracted the attention of other publishers. In late September 1891, Gissing received a letter from the new firm of Lawrence and Bullen, who had recently published three books by Gissing’s friend Morley Roberts and his brother Cecil, offering to publish a one-volume novel at 6s,

giving Gissing an advance of £100 and a royalty of 1s for each copy.<sup>42</sup> Gissing sent them a manuscript titled ‘The Radical Candidate’ on 14 November, which Lawrence & Bullen accepted on the 20<sup>th</sup> provided he change the title to something that would not frighten off women readers. He changed it to *Denzil Quarrier* and on 27 November received a letter of agreement and a cheque from Lawrence & Bullen for £105. From then until 1898, Lawrence & Bullen would be Gissing’s publishers, publishing *The Odd Women* (1893), *In the Year of Jubilee* (1894), *Eve’s Ransom* (1895), *The Whirlpool* (1897), and *Human Odds and Ends: Stories and Sketches* (1898). They also reissued *The Emancipated* in 1893 and *The Unclassed* in 1895.

Although Gissing would never forgive Smith, Elder for *Thyrza*, he certainly held them in less contempt than he did Bentley. Nor did Smith, Elder completely shun Gissing. In January 1895, they asked him to contribute to a proposed series of 3s 6d novels. Gissing wrote to William Morris Colles, his new agent, that he had told them that he might offer something to them later but that he now dealt through Colles, stressing to Colles that an offer from Smith, Elder might be preferable to an offer from a newer firm and that ‘Of *going back* to S&E., there is no question; I should merely sell a volume to them for a special cheap series. I should never dream of letting them become, again, my regular publishers.’ as he preferred to keep his major works with Lawrence & Bullen (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 285-286). At the end of 1899 he told James B. Pinker, who was then his agent that ‘Very gladly I would have remained with Smith, Elder, had it been possible to live on what they paid me. And, by the bye, I notice that those of my books published my [sic] Smith are very much better known than those published by others — simply because all five novels appear constantly in Smith’s page of advertisements. The sale is probably much above that of the books with

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<sup>42</sup> *Diary* 257. The Roberts’ books were *Songs of Energy* (1891), *Land-Travel and Sea-Faring: Adventures at Sea and in Australia* (1891), and *Adrift in America: Work and Adventure in the United States* (1891), written by his brother Cecil and with an appendix by Morley Roberts.

L. & B. — a mere result of commercial tactics’. (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VI, 402). After Lawrence & Bullen dissolved their partnership in 1900, Pinker tried to get some other publisher to purchase the rights and plates from Bullen and approached Smith, Elder to take them but they refused the offer. Smith, Elder did keep Gissing’s books in print and in circulation, and continued to advertise them, which was at least a benefit to Gissing in keeping his novels before the public. After attending a dinner honouring George Meredith at the Omar Khayyám Club on 13 July 1895, at which Gissing and Hardy were among the speakers, Gissing was both pleased and embarrassed to see himself ranked in the *Chronicle* with Meredith and Hardy as one of the three greatest living British novelists. Gissing wrote to Bertz that ‘It is known to very few how poor I still am; most people think my books have a *large* sale, &, as the way of the world is, they treat me with great respect. I suppose the sale of my books is really increasing a little; but unfortunately the popular ones are those that belong to Smith & Elder’. (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VI, 18).

The one thing Gissing would always regret was selling the copyrights. On 29 September 1893 he wrote to Bertz that ‘In reserving to yourself the copyright you act, of course, very wisely. I only wish I had had the courage & the foresight to refuse to sell those novels out & out to Smith & Elder. They would now have been a source of income’. (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 148). They would have been, especially for the sale of *Demos* in later years. It is also possible, indeed likely, that a literary agent would have been more aggressive in selling the rights to print *New Grub Street* in the United States; it was not published in America until 1904. However, the royalties that would have come would not have been great. Sales were strongest in the first two years of an edition and profits and losses greatest during that time. From the third year of an edition on, Smith, Elder only averaged £1 on the annual sales of the 6s crown-octavo. The 2s 6d and 2s issues did better and had longer lives, but even on those, from the third year on sales

only averaged £10. If Gissing had been given a 15% royalty he may have made an average of £7 6s a year. On the other hand, when he did own the copyright, as with *Thyrza*, or, as with *The Emancipated*, where Bentley would have owed an additional payment to Gissing had he gone into another edition, the publishers had no incentive to sell above the copyright-earning number or to release a cheap edition.

Was *New Grub Street* an accurate reflection of the relations between authors and publishers in the late nineteenth century? Its setting was 1881, ten years before it was published, when copyrights were commonly sold outright, literary agents almost unknown, the three-decker novel and the circulating libraries ruled, and struggling authors earned little recognition and less money. Unless they gave into the commercialism that ruled the careers of Jasper Milvain, or James Payn, or Arthur Conan Doyle, or later with Gissing's friend H.G. Wells, literary authors had little chance to appeal to a broad audience that would buy enough of their books to let them, and not the publishers, dictate their terms. Two examples from the Smith, Elder ledgers may suffice to illustrate the point, before we go on to closer examination of the economics of book production in Chapter 7.

On 26 October 1891 Smith, Elder record the costs and sales for Doyle's *The White Company*, a novel Payn accepted even though George Smith and Payn both disliked publishing historical novels. Composing, paper, and printing 750 copies of the three-volume edition, using special small type cost £93 3s 11d. Binding cost £38 16s 3. Advertising cost at a total of £93 19s 1, but unlike Gissing, Doyle insisted on special advertising, to which he contributed £20 and Smith contributed £10, leaving a charge of £63 19s 1d. An itemized list of the advertising was provided. Postage and newspapers with reviews cost £2 3d. Instead of the 5% 'commission allowed to agents' that was deducted from sales, Doyle was charged 'Less Allowance to cover bad debts and sundries 5 percent'. This was charged as 5% of the gross sales for a total of £23 6s 9d.

Total production costs were £221 6s 3. The edition sold 641 copies through 1891, subscribers taking 83 as 80, Mudie's 244 as 234, and London Libraries 300 as 288, all at 15s. Two were sold to the trade at 18s and 12 at 22s 6d, leaving a gross sales figure of £526 16s. The profit of £305 9s 9d was divided between Doyle and Smith, Elder, and divided in Doyle's favour, two-thirds to him, or £203 13s 2d and one-third to Smith, Elder, £101 16s 7d.

Smith, Elder purchased Gissing's college friend Morley Roberts' book, *The Western Avenues*, on 7 February 1887, as a one-volume crown-octavo edition for £50. On 15 April they printed 1,500 copies. Paper and printing costs amounted to over £95, advertising to £51 13s 2d, and postage and commission brought total costs to £219 13s 5d. Sales were very disappointing, returning only £126 7d on sales of 19 copies at 5s and 475 at 5s 4d. The loss in the first year was £93 6s 5d and sales in the following years would be very few. Roberts lived by his writing, as did Gissing's brother Algernon. Their sales and their income never approached George Gissing's. Algernon, with his wife and five children, never earned more than £50 for any of his books, mainly novels about country life that had favourable reviews but had only a very limited market. He ended in life living on charity and selling his more famous brother's letters and manuscripts. The economics of the market quite simply depended on the saleability of an author. Unlike Gissing, James Payn did not sell his copyrights or accept any terms offered by a publisher. William Tinsley, in his publishing memoirs, offers a sample of a Payn contract:

Dear Mr. Tinsley, -- I offer you the right to publish in three volumes --- copies of my novel ----- , for the sum of £---; you have the right to print another edition in three volumes for the sum of £---, the copyright to revert to me at the end of twelve months, unless we agree about the absolute copyright of the one-volume edition during the time. — Yours truly, JAMES PAYN. (Tinsley 108).

Tinsley also mentions that it was customary for publishers to share Tauchnitz payments with authors but that Payn returned his, being satisfied with his copyright sale (Tinsley 105). Gissing, of course, never shared in the Tauchnitz payments for his novels.

Those who had a market could demand a market price, as seen above in the Doyle contract, and as Gissing noted when he had Watt put *Born in Exile* on the market. Writing to his sister Ellen on 7 September 1891 about Watt only being offered £120 for the English copyright by Chatto, he said 'So you see I am far from being able to command a large sum for a novel. If I get £150 I must think myself fortunate. I don't quite understand it, but it is now proved that S. & E. have not dealt so badly by me. I shall have to pay Watt his 10 per cent, but at all events I shall have discovered the utmost market price of my books'. (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 320). Gissing's market value would increase, especially as he began to write novels about the middle-classes and as the three-volume novel and the power of the circulating libraries died. Gissing also began selling short stories, some of his best and most profitable work. In 1892 he would earn over £272, in 1893 £193, in 1894 and 1895 £438 and £519. His income would drop to just over £100 in 1897 but rebound in the next year to £524. More importantly, experienced agents negotiated his contracts; he would be paid royalties and retain rights that would be inherited by his family after his death. He would, from the time he left Smith, Elder, be dealing with the commercial publishing world in the same manner as a modern author would. Smith, Elder would continue to earn a small income from their rights to his work, and, with the development of cinema, a substantial sum for the sale of *Demos*.



### Chapter 3: The Age of the Middleman: George Gissing and His Literary Agents

Perhaps nothing illustrates the dichotomy between the art and the commerce of literature better than the development of the relationship of literary agents to authors and publishers. George Gissing worked with all three of the major literary agents of the time, A. P. Watt, William Morris Colles, and J. B. Pinker, coming to them after eleven years of making his own sales and negotiating his own contracts with little success and in a world in which he was beginning to realize that markets had expanded beyond Great Britain and it would take skills he did not possess to exploit them.

Publishers complained that agents came between them and their authors; most authors, Gissing included, differed from their publishers on that point, and, working with agents, did not share the view that:

The agent is an unpleasant excrescence on literature, and one who is doing it incalculable harm. He is of recent growth; indeed, he was almost unknown five years ago. His is a cheap and easy business, all the stock required being unbounded impudence, pen, ink, and paper, and a small office. He sits in his room and scans the literary papers eagerly, and when he sees a new book run into its second or third edition he immediately devotes his attention to the author thereof (Laurie 852).

This 1895 view of literary agents, written by Thomas Werner Laurie, who worked for one of Gissing's publishers, T. Fisher Unwin, before founding his own publishing house, was shared by other publishers. William Heinemann saw the agent in much the same light in 1893: 'This is the age of the middleman. He is generally a parasite. ... I have been forced to give him some little attention lately in my particular business. In it he calls himself the literary agent' (Heinemann, 'The Middleman' 663). William Blackwood III, who did work with agents and appreciated what they could do for his house, was nevertheless still sceptical saying in 1904, 'these Literary Agents have reduced publishing to a level of a grocer's business without the profits' (Finkelstein, *House* 133). Publishers were not the only ones who saw literary agents as a threat. In a

long letter to the *Times* published on 22 May 1891 (3), titled 'New Literary Factors', Ouida called the literary agent 'the maggot of the nut: his is neither the kernel nor the shell; he is an esoteric body living between and upon the two' and deplored the commercialisation of literature. Literature had become a part of commerce, a fact recognized by the American publisher Henry Holt in his article 'The Commercialization of Literature', in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1905 (Gillies 28). Holt complained that 'the more authors seek publishers solely with reference to what they will pay in the day's market, the more publishers bid against one another as stock brokers do, and the more they market their wares as the soulless articles of ordinary commerce are marketed...'. In a satirical vein, William L. Alden, writing his 'London Literary Letter' for the 26 February 1898 *New York Times* saw the publisher opposing the agent 'Not because the publisher is a grasping person', but because the publisher feared that 'an author who makes money enough to warrant him in eating meat once a week will cease to be an artist and will become a mere literary tradesman' (BR140). Walter Besant defended agents and the commerce of literature in his reply to Ouida's letter (*Times* 26 May 1891: 8). He repeated much of his defence again in an article defending agents that he wrote for the December 1895 *Nineteenth Century* in which he saw Laurie's attack as directed at the prominent literary agents A. P. Watt and William Morris Colles but more specifically at Watt. To Besant, literature was both art and profession, as witnessed by the 'thousands of men and women ... who live by it' (Besant 1895, 979). If being concerned with the commercial value of their work degrades literature, then 'we do it in the company of Scott, Byron, Dickens, Tennyson, Thackeray, and George Eliot' (Besant 980). Alden and Besant's argument that fair payment, a literal 'living wage', was a necessity to art was shown in Gissing's decision to seek the help of Watt to increase the sale price of his copyrights.

Gissing made the conflict between art and economics central to the plot of *New Grub Street*, contrasting Reardon, the starving writer, dedicated to the art of literature, with Milvain, introduced as a 'Man of His Day' in the title of the first chapter, who saw literature as a trade that would bring him his 'thousand a year'. (*New Grub Street* 6).<sup>43</sup> And even though Gissing may not have seen any of Milvain in himself when he wrote *New Grub Street* in 1891, by 1899 he would be telling his agent, James Brand Pinker, that 'I look to you to get me an income of a thousand a year before we have done' (Gissing, *Collected Letters*, VII, 382). Although Gissing structured Milvain and Reardon as opposites, with himself as a model for Reardon, Gissing, as a mature and professional author, was also 'A Man of His Day', and increasingly aware of what an author must do to survive economically.

Although there is no literary agent in *New Grub Street*, one character, Whelpdale, a failed novelist, sets himself up as a literary adviser. Milvain tells Reardon that:

'He has an advertisement in *The Study* every week. 'To Young Authors and Literary Aspirants' -- something of the kind. 'Advice given on choice of subjects, MSS. read, corrected, and recommended to publishers. Moderate terms.' A fact! And what's more, he made six guineas in the first fortnight; so he says, at all events. Now that's one of the finest jokes I ever heard. A man who can't get anyone to publish his own books makes a living by telling other people how to write!'

'But it's a confounded swindle!'

'Oh, I don't know. He's capable of correcting the grammar of 'literary aspirants,' and as for recommending to publishers -- well, anyone can recommend, I suppose' (*New Grub Street* 173).

After five years of living entirely by his writing, Gissing knew that publishing was no longer confined simply to the sale of three-deckers to libraries and cheap reprints. By the end of 1891 he had sold nine novels, some of which had been published in American editions, republished in Europe, printed for sale in the British colonies of India and Australia, or translated and published abroad in book or serial

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<sup>43</sup> Indeed, *Ein Mann des Tages* became the title of the German translation of *New Grub Street*.

form. As was common at the time, he had sold the entire copyright in his initial sale and received no profits from any later editions. In fact Gissing was not even apprized of the existence of the continental or American editions by Smith, Elder and only found out about them from his friends. Such loss of income may have helped focus his mind on using a literary agent.

Historically there have been three definitions of 'literary agent': initially it meant a person who purchased books on behalf of an individual or institution, then as an advisor in the Whelpdale sense, and finally, the modern sense, as defined by A.P. Watt: in the Preface to his *Collection of Letters*:

The work of the Literary Agent is to conduct all business arrangements of every kind for Authors; that is to say, to place MSS. to the best advantage; to watch for openings; to sell Copyrights, either absolutely or for a limited period; to collect Royalties, and to receive other moneys due; to conduct Arbitrations, to transfer Literary Property; to obtain opinions on MSS., etc. etc.

Literary agents, in the sense we have of them today, did exist in 1881, the time period of *New Grub Street*, and were reasonably well-known by 1890-1891, when Gissing was writing that novel, but Gissing was seemingly as unaware of them then as were his characters. Shortly after he had published *New Grub Street* and while he was trying to sell his next novel, Gissing would see agents as indispensable. The nature of publishing was changing – indeed had changed – into a complex commercial activity and the agent was vital to the author's economic survival, as W. Martin Conway, writing on behalf of the Society of Authors, made clear in his reply to Laurie's attack in the December 1895 issue of *The Nineteenth Century*:

The agent has been produced by the growth of the English-speaking population in the world and the spread of education amongst the masses. As more people read, means of publication develop. An author who has written a work likely to attain wide popularity has produced a commodity which requires a great deal of commercial handling. The serial rights in various countries have to be arranged for. Translations have to be considered. Publication rights in book-form have to

be sold not only in England only, but in America, Canada, and elsewhere. An author had not time and probably not the knowledge to manage all of this business. It is work for an agent, and the existence of this work calls the agent into being (Conway 976).

Although A.P. Watt claimed to be the first literary agent, starting his agency in the 1870s, there were persons engaged in acting on behalf of authors from the late decades of the eighteenth century, precursors of the modern agent. John Ballantyne (1774-1821) provided services for Scott as literary agent and as publisher (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*). Thomas Jefferson served as the American minister plenipotentiary to Paris from 1784 to 1789 and in that service he procured books for American institutions and obtained 40 guineas for a translation of David Ramsay's history of the Revolutionary War into French (*Histoire de la révolution d'Amérique, par rapport à la Caroline méridionale*. London ; Paris, 1787) and its sale in England, while assisting another American author with his European sales (Parton 416). Another American diplomat, Thomas Aspinwall, the American consul to Great Britain from 1816 to 1854, would also qualify in the modern sense as a literary agent. Aspinwall was interested in literature and purchased books in London for his American friends. He quickly became known in the literary world of London. In 1819, he was approached by several British publishers who were interested in finding American firms which might negotiate copyrights for English books but nothing came of it. In 1827, Aspinwall negotiated a contract with John Murray for the American author Washington Irving for his *Life of Columbus*. Aspinwall received a commission of 75 guineas, 2 ½% of the sale price of 3000 guineas from Irving. Aspinwall's success with Irving's book brought him other business and by 1840 Aspinwall was charging a 10% commission (Barnes and Barnes 323). He sold William H. Prescott's *Ferdinand and Isabella* and other works to Bentley, and represented James Fennimore Cooper as well as other authors. Aspinwall's activities were not only confined to negotiating contracts, but also, as with later agents,

he acted as banker for his clients, holding the publishers' Bills of Exchange and advancing sums to the authors from them, or in some cases, advancing money to authors in anticipation of future sales (Barnes and Barnes 324-25).

Aspinwall was not alone in the field; the earliest entry for 'literary agent' in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is from an 1851 advertisement in *Notes and Queries* (28 June 1851: 527) for the Literary Agency of a Mr. F. G. Tomlins. The next citation in the *OED* is to an 1857 letter from G.H. Lewes saying that George Eliot would have to work as her own literary agent. In Lewes' case, as in that of John Forster, who served as Dickens' advisor, the duties were done on the basis of friendship and personal connection and not in the commercial sense of agency, as in the case of Aspinwall and others. Gissing once worked in the capacity of an agent in 1884, placing *The French Prisoners*, a children's novel that Bertz had written, with Macmillan for £25 (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 204-5). At the end of Aspinwall's career in London, American authors could still find some assistance: the British publisher Sampson, Low and Son ran an advertisement in the *New York Times* (then the *New York Daily Times*) from 24 April to 18 July 1854 offering their services to American authors and publishers in securing British copyrights, republication, or sale (*New York Daily Times*, 24 April 1854: 5). Literary agents also existed on the continent, at least as evidenced by a story in the *New York Times* on 23 February 1874, in which a young man impersonated a prince and paid to have an article on agriculture in the East printed in the *Journal des Débats*, at which point 'literary agents descended upon him', got the article reprinted in other journals, and handed him an outrageously large bill for their services (*New York Times*, 23 Feb. 1874: 1). An article in *Appleton's Journal* for 6 March 1875 (Hooper 314) also refers to an incident in which two people were arrested by 'the police, spurred on by the well-known dramatic and literary agent M. Michaelis' for copying down the dialogue of a play to which he owned the rights. In England the *Times*, on 6 March 1863 (3) and 23

June 1863 (5) ran classified ads by a 'Mr. Holland, literary agent', whose offices were first at 96 Great Russell Street, then at 18 Tavistock Street, looking to hire writers and translators and for gentlemen requiring a pamphlet, essay or translation on short notice. In the *Times* of 22 April 1869, a court report recounts the awarding of £5 to a Mrs Sutton as money due for her work as a 'literary agent and amanuensis' for a Mrs Borradaile, whom she had met in Whitecross Street Prison (11). And, in a letter to the *Times* 29 September 1871, W. J. Stillman who described himself as a 'literary agent' for American magazines, defended American publishers against charges of piracy (4).

Alexander Pollock (A.P.) Watt (1834-1914) claimed to be the first literary agent, representing George MacDonald in 1878, but as in the case of Lewes and Forster, this was done more out of friendship than as a professional agent. Watt had several years experience in publishing, having worked for his brother-in-law, Alexander Strahan, after he moved to London in 1871. He became Strahan's partner in 1876, and in 1878 he was selling advertising in his periodicals. Although the agency he founded (and which still exists) claimed 1975 as its centenary year, there is no firm evidence to show that Watt was engaged professionally as an agent before 1878. Testifying in New York City in 1899 as witness in a suit brought by Kipling against the American publishing firm of G.P. Putnam's Sons, Watt stated that he had been an agent for twenty years, which would put the start of his business at 1879 (*New York Times*, 28 April 1899, 2). The earliest letter in the *Collection of Letters Addressed to A.P. Watt by Various Writers*, a book of testimonial letters from authors and publishers that Watt published to attract clients, is from Wilkie Collins and dated 1880. Watt was still calling himself an advertising agent in an advertisement he placed in the *Times* July 16, 1880 (15) to rent his summer house. Certainly his advertisement in the *Publisher's Circular* for 18 January 1881 indicates that he was engaged in his commercial work by then, although it seems to have not been his sole business as his office was placing advertisements in the *Times* offering employment

in hotels (14 May 1883: 3), the tea trade (22 May 1883: 3) sanitary engineering (27 October 1886: 14) or selling an English bookshop in Paris (September 8, 1888: 15). However, if Watt was not the first literary agent, he was certainly the most successful, perhaps because he insisted that payment from publishers came directly to his office for disbursement to his authors. It ensured his payment and made his role clear to both publisher and author. At his death in 1914 Watt left an estate of £59,828 (*Times*, 10 February 1915: 11).

During the 1890s Watt would be joined by several other competitors, most notably William Morris Colles and his Authors' Syndicate, founded in 1890; James B. Pinker, who founded his agency in 1896; the Literary Agency of London, started by George Herbert Perris and Charles Francis Cazenove in 1899; and Curtis Brown, an American who became head of the International Publishing Bureau in Henrietta Street in 1899 (Hepburn 65). By 1894, six literary agents were listed in the *Post Office Directory* and by 1899 there were eight listed in the *Literary Year Book*.

Although Watt had begun his work before George Gissing began seeking a publisher for his first novel (*Workers in the Dawn*, 1880) there is no mention of Watt or of any other agents in Gissing's letters or diary until 1891 when he came across a 'prospectus' for A.P. Watt, apparently an early edition of the *Collection of Letters Addressed to A.P. Watt by Various Writers* that Watt would publish in various editions from the 1890s to 1929. The earliest edition that I have been able to locate is 1893 and in that edition, ten letters were dated on or after 1891, so the edition that Gissing saw must have been earlier and smaller, prompting him to call it a prospectus rather than a book.<sup>44</sup> Gissing wrote a letter to his brother Algernon (29 April 1891) asking him if he had seen 'Watt's prospectus, which I sent with *New Grub Street*? It seems to me that such

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<sup>44</sup> The Columbia University Library (<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/cresources/archives/collections/html/4079831.html>) says that there were editions 'published in 1889, 1898, 1899, 1924, 1929, etc.'



a man may well be of use, especially in helping one to dispose of short stories. The letters sent to him by authors are remarkable' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 291).

In a Gissing letter of 19 January 1891, he said 'Not long ago I read Besant's life of Jefferies [a naturalist and novelist]. The commercial B. there states that, on good evidence, he knows Jefferies to have received from Smith & Elder as much as could reasonably be expected.' The Watt Collection of *Letters* of 1893 and 1896 open by quoting Besant from *The Eulogy of Richard Jefferies*:

'Such a man as Jefferies, with his necessities of fresh air and solitude, should have been adopted and nursed by some rich man; or he should have been piloted by some agent who would have transacted all his business for him, placed his articles in the most advantageous way, procured him the best possible price for his books, and relieved him from the trouble of haggling and bargaining – a necessary business to one who lives by his pen, but to one of his disposition an intolerable trouble.'

In the 1893 edition the Besant letter to Watt, written in 1887, echoes what is in the Jefferies piece:

'Not only have I profited from a pecuniary point of view, but my work can be carried on with far less stress and worry than it was when I had for a brief period to manage my own affairs. There is nothing more disagreeable than arranging about the money value of one's own work, and nothing more horrid than the thought of having to hawk it about from one House to another, trying to find out what it is worth.'

Along with testimonials from authors, Watt included letters from publishers, printing nine of them in the 1893 edition and sixteen in the 1896 edition, including a Bentley letter of 1885 attesting to 'The straightforward character of all your transactions with us, which makes it a pleasure doing business with you.' Smith, Elder's letter from 1895 adds 'Your habit being to state clearly at the outset the terms you ask on behalf of the author, we have realised at once what the author has wanted, when it is not difficult to see how far it is possible for us to meet his views.' There is a letter from Longmans from 1885, and the printing of the 1893 and 1896 editions is by Constable, perhaps an implied endorsement. Authors in the 1893 edition included the Wilkie Collins testimonial from 1880, along with an 1887 codicil naming Watt as Collins

literary executor, a Bret Harte letter from 1885, James Payn from 1885, Mrs Oliphant and H. Rider Haggard from 1886, Kipling from 1890 (saying Watt had doubled his income). Letters written in 1891 and 1892 from Arthur Conan Doyle, Jerome K. Jerome, Thomas Hardy, and E.W. Hornung appear in the 1893 edition, possibly indicating that they had become clients sometime after Gissing signed with Watt in 1891.

At the time Gissing saw the Watt prospectus, he was working on a novel titled 'Godwin Peak' that was later published as *Born in Exile*. He must have thought of contacting Watt even before he received an unsatisfactory offer from Smith, Elder for *Born in Exile*, telling Algernon on 20 June 1891 that after he finished *Born in Exile* he was planning to begin another short novel 'just for the sake of giving it to Watt, & asking him to do his best with it.' Gissing finished *Born in Exile* in late July, writing to his friend Bertz on 20 July that the novel was done and that he anticipated putting a new short book 'into the hands of a certain literary agent who is highly recommended by Besant, Grant Allen, Kipling, & so on, & so on' (Gissing, *Collected Letters*, IV, 306)

Gissing sent the manuscript of *Born in Exile* to James Payn, his reader at Smith, Elder on 20 July 1891, asking for £250 for the English and American copyright, a provision that reflects his awareness of foreign rights sales (*Gissing, London* 251). Gissing had suspected that Smith, Elder had been selling rights abroad, and had already written to Harpers in America, inquiring about his republication there. He received a reply from them on 25 July that they had purchased the American rights to *Demos* and *The Nether World*, paying £10 and £15 to Smith for each (*Gissing, London* 251). The sums paid were merely token payments as there was no American copyright for English authors prior to 1891. Payn wrote to Gissing, declining to pay £250 and offering only £150 for the British rights, claiming that *New Grub Street* was not a financial success (it was not, in the three-volume edition, but for reasons other than sales) and Gissing's novels too

pessimistic to attract wider sales. As noted in Chapter 2, Gissing replied to Payn noting that he did not have the skills to sell American rights on his own, making the reservation of that right meaningless to him. Not succeeding with Smith, Elder, on August 11 Gissing sent the manuscript to Watt, saying that 'Godwin Peak' should bring £200. On August 13 Watt acknowledged receipt of the manuscript which he had in turn sent on to Chatto and Windus asking for £200 for the British copyright. On 27 August, Gissing told Bertz that Watt, 'highly recommended by Besant & Co.', had just told him that Chatto & Windus would not give him more than £120, an amount that Watt thought 'impossible' and that he was taking it to Longmans (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 317). In the *Diary* for 6 October Gissing had a reply from Watt that Longman would not take the book and he was taking it to Bentley. Gissing wrote back that he could not wait past October but then decided 'not to send it, as I still possess £27'. Unsuccessful with Longman and with Bentley, the novel was finally taken by A.C. Black at the end of December 1891 for £150, £75 upon acceptance and the remainder on publication, which was scheduled for October but which actually occurred in late April 1892 after much revision by Gissing. Gissing had his first cheque from Watt on 6 January 1892 for £67 10s, the half of the payment less Watt's 10%. Gissing wrote to Bertz on 15 January 1892 that the novel had finally sold but with Watt's 10% commission, Gissing's 'hope of getting *more* through him is frustrated' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 3). The six-month wait for the sale of *Born in Exile* was difficult for Gissing because his wife was expecting a baby and he had no income until he was able to sell *Denzil Quarrier* to Lawrence and Bullen in November 1891. On 11 December 1891, frustrated by delay in placing the novel, Gissing wrote in his diary that he had made a mistake in using Watt and was wishing he 'had never got into his hands' (Gissing, *London* 263). In the end, Gissing felt that if the market for his novel was only £150 after all, then, even if he did have to pay his 10% he would at least have 'discovered the

utmost market price' of his book and that Smith had dealt fairly with him (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 320).

Gissing remained with Watt for the next two years. By 1893, he was feeling dissatisfied with Watt, perhaps because of the difficulties Watt had in selling the American rights to *Born in Exile*. In a letter to Algernon of 13 June 1893 (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 115-116) Gissing expressed his frustration, feeling that 'Watt won't trouble himself much unless large profits are to be made'. Gissing was perhaps not suited to Watt's conservative tastes and, as Gillies says, 'Watt was less active than Pinker and others in helping to develop a market for experimental writers...' (Gillies 30). In the summer of 1893, Algernon had asked his brother how to contact Colles' Authors' Syndicate. Gissing had heard from his friend Morley Roberts that 'they get for him much higher prices than he would have ventured to ask for himself; moreover, that he has been paid *several times* for certain stories, which have appeared in paper after paper. Their habit is to settle with authors every half year, & they charge a 10% commiss<sup>n</sup>.' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 115). Gissing advised Algernon that Watt did the same kind of work, without the guinea a year payment for membership of the Society of Authors; Gissing did not become a member until January of 1894 and only then because he did not like to make use of Colles without being a member (Gissing, *London* 327). However, 'The Authors' people... are trying hard to extend their connection, & indeed seem to be very painstaking. I doubt that I shall have to try them myself very soon, for mere bread & cheese' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 115-116)

On 19 September 1893, Gissing wrote to William Morris Colles (1855-1926), asking him if he would be interested in disposing of a few short stories of some six thousand words each that he had written and not yet offered for sale. Gissing had had some recent and profitable successes in selling his short stories: Blackwood had paid him £20 in November 1892 for 'Victim of Circumstances' and Shorter would soon

purchase two stories, 'Muse of the Halls' (*English Illustrated Magazine*, December 1893) and 'Fleet-Footed Hester' (*Illustrated London News*, Christmas Issue 1893). Shorter returned the proofs of 'Fleet-Footed Hester' to Gissing in August, with a note that 'he presumed' Gissing would accept 12 guineas a story and Gissing wrote in his diary that he 'supposed I must' (Gissing, *London* 312). In July 1893 Edward Arnold had sent Gissing 11 guineas for a story in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, 'Not quite enough,' he thought (Gissing, *London* 311). Gissing knew he could sell more stories and at higher prices, 'But the question of price is arising, & I find it necessary to know what the market value of such a work really is' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 145). Gissing met Colles at his office at 4 Portugal Street on 22 September 1893 and found him to be 'cordial, a fat, red-faced, vivacious man, and a great talker. He tells me in selling short stories, I ought to get 3 guineas as a thousand words, for the English serial rights. Left him with five short stories to dispose of' (*Diary*, 316). A month later Colles had interested Jerome K. Jerome, who was starting a new paper called *To-Day*, in Gissing and he was asked to do a series of 'London types,' but Gissing, busy with *In the Year of Jubilee*, would put the series off until much later, when he did a series called 'Nobodies at Home' for *To-Day*. Jerome did purchase 'Under an Umbrella' for the predicted 3 guineas a thousand words at the end of October and 'The Day of Silence' for the *National Review* at '30/ a page of 460 words,' with Gissing receiving a cheque for it from Colles on 27 November for £13 10s, £15 less his commission (Gissing, *London* 320-322). In February 1894 Colles sold 'A Capitalist' and 'A Lodger in Maze Pond' for £30 to the *National Review*, Gissing receiving a cheque for £25 8s for them in March (Gissing, *London* 328, 331). In July Colles sold 'His Brother's Keeper' to *Chapman's Magazine* (Gissing, *London* 342) for which Gissing recorded receiving £15 6s when it was published in June 1895.

Colles was Gissing's agent from 1893 until 1898, and still continued to do some work for him after Gissing began using Pinker in 1898. Colles had been to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and qualified as a barrister at the Inner Temple. He became legal counsel to the Society of Authors and a member of its executive committee. The 1890 report of the committee announced a 'syndicate for supplying papers &c with works of fiction...' (Colby, "What Fools" 62). The Syndicate's aim was to bring authors and newspaper editors together without the influence of a middleman such as Tillotson's Fiction Bureau, which purchased serial rights and sold them on to provincial papers. Later, however, Colles would need to use Tillotson's as well as Pinker, Watts, and others to place manuscripts consigned to him. As an agent he was only moderately successful. His style was too refined, literary, and aloof, and he lost clients, like Gissing, to more business-like agents. In April 1898, Colles removed the Syndicate from the Society's sponsorship. Colby thinks the break occurred because Colles could no longer afford to accept the lower commissions he had to offer Society authors and may have felt that he had too many dealings with lesser authors (Colby, "What Fools" 80). Colles eventually lost his connection with the Society of Authors when they stopped advertising the Syndicate in the 1900s (Bonham-Carter 1, 167-168).

Colles placed material for his authors, worked with American agents for placement there, gave his authors legal advice, and provided a 'cutting' (clipping) service, charging additional fees for these services beyond his originally stated 5% commission to Society members. Gissing's diary for 22 January 1898 records a £40 3s cheque for the American (Dodd, Mead) edition of his *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* out of a £50 payment. The £40 3s represents the deduction of Colles' 10% commission, plus fees for typing the manuscript (Gissing, *London* 481). However, Gissing's payment of 10% commissions even after he had become a member of the Society may indicate that the Society discount was no longer offered. Colles also may have wanted to

separate his business from the Society to avoid the confusion Gissing had in believing that Society membership was necessary for his services.

In his 1895 article, Laurie charged that the publisher, after spending £200 or £300 on advertising a new novelist in the hope of making a profit on the next work, was thwarted by the agent who signed the author, took him to a young firm which was willing to pay for anyone with good advertising, but whose inexperience resulted in a loss to both them and the author. This picture had some resonance in the career of Gissing, whose works were well promoted by Smith, Elder but were not as successful when he moved to the young and inexperienced firm of Lawrence and Bullen in 1891. In Gissing's case, the move was made on his own initiative. Colles, despite having some connection with Lawrence and Bullen, tried without success to get Gissing to move to other, more aggressive and larger firms but Gissing refused. Writing to Colles in early February 1894, Gissing told him that the novel that would become *In the Year of Jubilee* was nearing completion and would be offered by Gissing to Lawrence & Bullen. Gissing felt it was too long to be serialized and would not offer it to Colles for that purpose. On 4 February he further explained to Colles about his decision to send the novel to Lawrence & Bullen and not let Colles have it:

I beg you not to think that there is the slightest reluctance on my part to put a novel into your hands; undoubtedly you would get the best obtainable terms for me, as you have done in all these other instances. But I have promised my friend A.H. Bullen that he shall have this book, &, what is more, our personal relations preclude any thought of injustice on his side or of discontent on mine. This will explain the matter (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V,182).

A week later Gissing wrote again to Colles (*Gissing, Collected Letters* V, 183):

You must not think that I let my books go on terms unfair to myself or to authors in general. Whether Lawrence & Bullen are able to do as well with them as an older firm might, is an open question; but it is certain that of what comes to them from sales I am entitled to no meagre proportion. The copyrights remain my own. Of all foreign issues, I receive half the profits; on the English publication I take a royalty – represented hitherto, I am sorry to say, by substantial payments on account before the books have appeared. Every expense of publishing is laid before me in the frankest way, so that I become in truth, what you desire an author should be, a partner in the commercial undertaking. L. & B. have published three books for me – one a reprint ('The Emancipated'), & as yet they lose by the transactions. This, of course, I state to you in confidence. If they are willing to venture once more on my new novel, I could not dream of taking elsewhere a book which may perhaps prove more fortunate than the others.

You will see that the friendship which enters into our relations, if it operates at all in matters of £. s. d., works decidedly to *my* advantage. It must be confessed that my late books have been dull; they are well reviewed, but people don't care enough for them to make them a commercial success. No use in groaning over this; there may be hope in the future.

I really think very little about the matter – having, as you see, settled my agreements on a just basis. Since 1886 I have managed to *live* by literature– or, let us say, by writing; & the fact seems to be rather wonderful, for never have I tried to please the public, & I have, in fact, pleased only the minutest fraction of it. You are perfectly right in insisting upon an author's duty to his fellows – as against rapacious men of business. But on that point my withers are unwrung. If – as may well happen – my books cease to pay for publishing, necessity will drive me into new methods; but as yet I keep up a sort of hope.'

Although Gissing was happy enough with Colles initially, he became dissatisfied with him and felt that he did not work hard enough to serialize his novels. It may be that the problem lay with Gissing rather than Colles, since, as shown here, Gissing was not including Colles in all of his dealings. Gissing offered Colles numerous short stories yet delivered more stories to C. K. Shorter on his own behalf for publication in the *Illustrated London News*. He never delivered to Colles the novels he promised, abandoning them and submitting others directly to the publishers. Colles and Methuen had assumed in 1895 that *Eve's Ransom* would come to them; instead Gissing placed it with Lawrence and Bullen. In a postscript to Gissing's letter to Colles on 19 January 1895, Gissing said:

'Forgive the trouble I am causing you. Remember that I work slowly; I shall never be able to turn out very much. What I *am* bent on doing, is to write books that will be read, not only to-day, but some years hence. If, as I sincerely hope, you are able to manage the serial agreements for much of my work to come, it is in the interest of



both of us that I should move onward no whit less carefully than hitherto. I dare not lose the respect of the highest class of readers for the sake of immediate profit' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 286).

Gissing seems to have been concentrating on serial sales of his novels as the best way to make money and on using Colles solely for that purpose: in February Gissing informed Colles that *Eve's Ransom* will be issued in a six-shilling edition and that he thinks it 'will make it easier to place my next in some serial' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 294).

While Colles was acting as Gissing's agent in placing certain short stories and some novels, Gissing bypassed Colles to accept commissions directly from C. K. Shorter for the serialization of *Eve's Ransom* in the *Illustrated London News* and its volume publication by Lawrence & Bullen in 1894-95. He also placed *The Paying Guest* with Cassell and *Sleeping Fires* with Fisher Unwin, both in 1895, *The Whirlpool* with Lawrence & Bullen in 1897, and *Human Odds and Ends* with them in 1898. Colles was allowed to negotiate the American rights for *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study*; Gissing had been asked to write the book for Blackie in 1896 and did not pay a commission to Colles for the advance from them, only for the advance from Dodd, Mead. Gissing had also been asked by Methuen to write prefaces to the Rochester edition of Dickens that Methuen was publishing and Gissing referred him to Colles, who handled the payments. The only novel Colles was given to place was *The Town Traveller* and, although he did well in selling the English and American rights, Gissing was not satisfied with Methuen's handling of the novel and with Colles' failure to serialize it. On 28 January 1898 (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 49), Gissing wrote from Italy to Colles with a firm 'No' regarding Methuen's offer for *The Town Traveller*, as he wrote it 'expressly for serial use' and would either withdraw the novel or 'have a considerably more important advance' than Methuen's offer. Colles was able to secure a better offer from Methuen and on 12 February, Gissing wrote back to Colles with satisfaction and thanks for his being able to

secure £250 from Methuen for English rights and £100 from Frederick A. Stokes in New York for the American rights (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 61). The United States copyright act of 1891 had ended the piracy of British books in America and made the copyrights vastly more valuable than they had previously been: thus Colles was able to sell the American copyright for £100, compared to the £10 or £15 that Smith, Elder had been able to obtain for Gissing's books in the late 1880s.

When Algernon wrote to Gissing for advice on finding a new publisher in January 1895, Gissing dissuaded him from using Colles, saying that 'Colles nowadays works only for members of the Society, &, apart from that, he is not a very active man; for me, he might have done much more than of late. He goes out of town for weeks at a time, & his work seems to lie by. On the other hand, I think it would be well if you wrote a letter to Watt...'. Gissing went on to say that he believed Watt to be 'fairly conscientious' and that Watt's new book of letters shows that he even sells first novels (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 276). Again, in 1896 Gissing advised Algernon to 'Stick to Watt. Don't go at all to Colles. Hudson has done so, & repents it; Colles is getting fat & lazy. Watt has a far better reputation, & if any man can help you, he can' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VI, 148). Despite this, Gissing was still using Colles, writing to his friend Clara Collet on 26 December 1897 that 'Colles cannot serialize my novel "The Town Traveller" before 1899 or 1900. By then I shall have starved to death. I fear Watt would have done better for me. But I cannot break away from old friends on a question of interest' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 22). Starvation was only a slight exaggeration on Gissing's part, as 1897 had been a most difficult year for him. In that year he sold *The Whirlpool* to Lawrence & Bullen for £78 12s 6d on account, received £5 17s 7d for 'Simple Simon', a story that had been published a year earlier, and small royalties of £3 or less each for *The Emancipated*, *Denzil Quarrier*, *The Odd Women*, *In the Year of Jubilee*, and *Eve's Ransom*. He recorded his total income for the year at only £101 13s 4d, little more

than he had earned in 1886. Illness, domestic conflict, and his departure for Italy to write his book on Dickens left him with little time to write and sell short stories. Even though the sale of *The Town Traveller* in 1898 brought him more money for a book than he had ever had before, he thought little of the book and was displeased that Methuen listed him among lesser writers in their advertisements. His displeasure with what he felt to be Colles' slowness only mounted. In later years Gissing's letters were addressed to the Syndicate and seldom to Colles. On 22 October 1899, Gissing wrote to the Syndicate to return a receipt for payment of £9 for his 'Pickwick' preface to the Rochester edition of Dickens and querying if they had paid in advance as he had seen no publication announcement of it by Methuen. He also queried the Syndicate's charge for 9s for postage and delivery of a manuscript, something he had not been charged for before:

'There is yet another point of which I wish to speak. Mess.<sup>rs</sup> Methuen have as yet rendered no account of *The Town Traveller*, though by agreement they should do so twice a year. Will you have the kindness to procure for me, without fail, the statement up to this coming Christmas. In their adverts. of the book, they announce 'Second edition.' I must therefore be informed how many copies constituted the first edition. English publishers are for the most part utterly regardless of their obligation to furnish an account regularly twice a year, so long as the book is on sale. You will greatly oblige me by obtaining this statement regularly henceforth.' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 385)

I think his anger can be seen in his underlining of the last sentence, something that for him that must have been the equivalent of shouting. But while Colles may have been left out of the partnership, and perhaps was not as aggressive as he might have been, Gissing may have been right in changing agents simply because Gissing himself and later Pinker were able to arrange better terms than Colles had been getting. Fisher Unwin had given Gissing £5 per thousand words for *Sleeping Fires* in 1895 and Pinker would consistently get the same rate for the stories he placed for Gissing, better payment than Gissing had received from Colles. Whether the increase was due to better negotiating skills from Pinker or more demand for Gissing's work it would not be possible to say.

Despite his penchant for operating on his own with contacts he had already established, Gissing did realize the importance of agents to authors. In the spring of 1895, Alfred Charles Harmsworth, owner of *The Evening News*, started the *London Magazine* and wanted a Gissing story for its first issue. Gissing had a cheque for £15 sent directly to him, supposedly because Harmsworth did not like dealing with agents, although in fact the editors were dealing directly with Colles. Gissing wrote a letter to the *London Magazine* editor, defending Colles and agents, saying ‘Personally, I think Mr Harmsworth’s objection an unfortunate one; for I have found it a very great relief to depend upon Mr Colles for the business transactions connected with my literary work. It has not seldom happened that the necessity of arranging details of publication has made me unable to do any writing for a day or two; no doubt mine is an extreme case of inaptitude for practical affairs’ (Gissing, *Collected Letters*, V, 305-6, 318, 319.)

Colles had placed all of the stories that Gissing had initially given him in 1893 and he would continue to place whatever stories Gissing gave him, a task that was sometimes difficult because of the dark tone of Gissing’s stories. A Gissing story Colles submitted to the *Lady’s Realm* was returned to Colles on 22 November 1898 with a note from the editor saying that ‘He is sorry he cannot accept them, but he would like to see some in a more cheerful vein of this writer’ (Lilly Library). A similar letter dated 10 February 1899 from *The Cornhill* returned the manuscript with the comment that ‘Your anticipation has unhappily proved correct: the story is too unbearably gloomy’ (Lilly MS). Colles was not successful in serializing *The Town Traveller*, though Methuen, at that time going by his original name, A.M.M. Stedman, had written a note to Colles in August 1897 asking ‘What do you want for the serial rights of G. Gissing? We might buy them if (1) we get the book rights (2) we have the refusal of his next novel. I think we could help his vogue, & I should much like to have him’ (Lilly Library MS). When negotiating the contract, Colles had the ‘elsewhere’ in the standard ‘British Empire and

elsewhere' rights clause struck out and 'with the exception of Canada' written in, allowing him to sell it to Stokes for American and Canadian publication for £100. He also had the standard '13 as 12' struck out, so Gissing would get his royalty on every copy sold and not be shorted by the publisher's discount, as many writers were.

In early June 1898, Gissing sent three stories to Colles ( 'The Peace Bringer', published in *Lady's Realm*, October 1898; 'The Elixir', published in *The Idler*, May 1899; and 'At Nightfall', published in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in May 1900) with a note that 'If you can dispose of these for good terms, I shall be glad. If you can dispose of them speedily, I shall be gladder' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 98). An Authors' Syndicate item now in the Lilly Library at Indiana University in Bloomington records the progress of the manuscript of 'At Nightfall' as Colles sent it around to 15 different publishers, continuing to try to place it in a British publication even after he had finally sold it to Lippincott in America. There was little delay: the manuscripts were returned quickly and were sent out expeditiously, in some cases, on the day they were returned, although there were some delays: the manuscript returned by Bell on 30 August was not sent on until the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September:

At Nightfall (4.VI.98)  
P.M.M. 9.vi.98 ret 23.vi.98  
Windsor 24.vi.98 ret. 7.vii.98  
Moberly Bell 7.vii.98 ret 30.8.98  
LR 23.9.98 ret 23.xi.98 Hulton(S.C.) 23.xi.98 ret. 9.xii.98  
Cornhill at £10.10/- 3.2.99 ret. 11.2.99  
Madame 28.iii.99 ret 8.iv.99  
Lippincott 19.iv.99. Windsor 28.vi.99 ret 20.vii.99  
Fortnightly 20.vii.99 ret 22.vii.99  
Literature 19.x.99 ret 6.1.00  
Graphic 9.1.00 ret. 1.00  
Teller 12.3.00 ret 22.3.00  
Speaker 29.3.00 ret 7.5.00  
Longman's Mag 22.3.00 ret 26.3.00  
Sold to Lippincott \$65 9.vi.99 (Lilly Library)

Unfortunately, Gissing did not see the effort, only the delay. In February 1899 he wrote to Colles, pleading illness as his excuse for not writing earlier and inquiring about the remaining two of the three stories he had sent, and, without further explanation, telling Colles that he had been obliged to make ‘separate arrangements’ for his new novel, *The Crown of Life* (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 295). Colles was upset by what he must have seen as a betrayal. Gissing, in his reply of 20 February 1899, did not seem to understand why Colles should have been offended and that, if anyone should be, Gissing had more right to be offended by Colles delay in selling his stories:

Now, *why* should you be deeply hurt? Pray look at the matter from my point of view, & what can be simpler? I have always held myself absolutely free as regards disposing of my work; indeed, otherwise I should not be able to work at all, for restraints harass me. What is more, from the first I made it distinctly known to you that I held myself free.

Consider the peculiarity of my position – the ridiculous contrast between my reputation & my income from literature. It is only natural that I should try this, that & the other method of selling my work; a more energetic man (and one less afraid of hurting people’s feelings) would have made ten changes to my one. – Whilst I was engaged on the new novel, a friend said to me: Why not deal with it—so & so —? And I accepted his suggestion, seeing no earthly reason why I should not.

As you yourself once candidly (& justifiably) said to me, I am ‘getting on in life,’ that is to say, in years, & much as it goes against the grain with me to hurt my friends, I cannot allow such considerations to weigh in a matter of the gravest personal concern.

You did very well with my last book; I never dreamt of complaining; the transaction, let us say, was satisfactory to both of us. Now that I choose another way of going about the business, do you – frankly – think that you do right in feeling injured?

I never anticipated such a reply to my last letter. In truth, it seemed to me that the important item of that letter was the question I asked concerning two short stories I wrote eight months ago, & sent to you. If you have not been able to dispose of them, I assuredly shall not feel ‘hurt’; but may I not point to such difficulties as a complete justification of my step? In a word, the case is abnormal; there is no comparison between my own peculiar harassments in the literary career, & those of any other writer; & it results from these circumstances that I must have an absolutely free hand. (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 299)

Colles must have been doubly upset because Gissing was dealing not only with Pinker, but through Pinker with Methuen, who had published Gissing’s *The Town Traveller* after Colles’ negotiations, to Gissing’s surprised satisfaction, for *The Crown of*

*Life* (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 305). After this letter, most of Gissing's remaining correspondence with Colles was addressed to the Author's Syndicate and concerned items that Gissing had placed earlier.

Between 1893 and 1898, the Authors' Syndicate earned £585 9s 1d for Gissing, less their commissions and fees for typing, telegrams, and postage to France. This represents only part of Gissing's output during these seven years and does not include the 20 stories he placed directly with C. K. Shorter for the *English Illustrated Magazine*, the 28 stories he placed elsewhere, and the six novels (*The Odd Women*, *In the Year of Jubilee*, *Eve's Ransom*, *The Paying Guest*, *Sleeping Fires*, *the Whirlpool*) and the short-story collection, *Human Odds and Ends*, that he published with Lawrence and Bullen, Cassell, and T. Fisher Unwin during the same period. On his own and apart from Colles, Gissing earned a further £1,399 17s 1d during this seven-year period. Gissing's behaviour towards Colles was not unique, as Gissing's close friend H.G. Wells, who also used Watt, Colles, and Pinker as agents, acted in the same manner. Wells had arranged for the sale of the American book rights to *War of the Worlds* through Heinemann, bypassing his other agent, Watt, to make the deal directly, while assigning Colles the job of selling British and American serial rights. Colles had assumed that all rights sales would be done by him and was embarrassed to find out while he was in negotiations with Harper that he was not able to offer American books rights (Burns 163-199).

Gissing had met James Brand Pinker (1863-1922) by accident at Waterloo station on 27 August 1897 and they rode on the train together to Epsom. That evening Gissing wrote to Pinker asking him to sell the American rights to *Human Odds and Ends: Stories and Sketches*, forwarding the letter to H. G. Wells, as Gissing did not know Pinker's address or even his initials (Gissing, *London* 443). Despite his late start as an agent in 1896, he quickly came to represent some of the most notable writers of the late

nineteenth century, and included Arnold Bennett, H.G. Wells, Oscar Wilde, and most famously, Joseph Conrad among his clients. Unlike Watt, Pinker was a champion of new and adventurous novelists, investing in and supporting writers like Conrad until they became successful. Pinker was never able to sell the American rights to *Human Odds and Ends* but he did want Gissing's business. In late November 1898, Gissing wrote to Gabrielle Fleury (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 232):

‘I told you that I was not very well satisfied with my agent, Colles. Well, a few days ago I received a letter from another man, named Pinker, who is very successful in the literary business; he wrote to ask whether I would allow him to undertake business for me. Indeed, I had been thinking of employing him, so I replied at once, asking him to come & see me. He is to come next Sunday, & I shall get him to do the business of “The Crown of Life” for me, as soon as the book is ready. Of course I want to get as much money for this as possible – for our journey to Greece, among other things!’

Pinker and Gissing met on 27 November 1898 to ‘do the business of “The Crown of Life”’. On 30 November 1898 Gissing wrote to Pinker, who had arranged for the *Pall Mall Magazine* to publish an as yet-unwritten story by Gissing on terms that Gissing thought were very good, especially without any story in hand (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 236). Pinker sold *The Crown of Life* to Methuen for £300, with a royalty of 20% on first 2500 copies and 25% after, with 4 pence on the colonial edition. This was the best price Gissing had yet received and he was impressed by Pinker's energy and abilities, and needed someone he could trust to handle his affairs, especially as Gissing had also resolved to leave England to live in France with Gabrielle as husband and wife. On 6 May 1899 he left England to join Gabrielle in Rouen, moving to Paris in June. In his letter to Gabrielle in early February 1899 Gissing told her that ‘Pinker is a splendid



man of business, & will relieve me from all trouble when I am out of England' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 291).

Gissing was able to develop a closer and much more personal relationship with Pinker than he had with either Watt or Colles. Watt was 23 years his senior, Colles only two years older, but from a vastly different background. Pinker was six years Gissing's junior and a photograph, reproduced in David Finkelstein's *The House of Blackwood* (146), shows a clean shaven Pinker, with his bow-tie, cigarette, and close-cropped hair, looking far more like a man of the twentieth century than of the nineteenth. Pinker had been a journalist and an editor, working in Constantinople and later in London before becoming one of the most powerful agents of his day (Hepburn 57). Pinker is probably best-known as Conrad's agent, friend, and financial manager, a position that brought accusations against him in 1904 by William Heinemann of unethical behaviour in his treatment of Conrad, something that both Pinker and Conrad denied (Finkelstein 148). The enmity between Heinemann and Pinker would have a serious impact on Gissing's attempt to have another publisher purchase the plates and rights from A.H. Bullen of the novels Gissing had originally published with Lawrence and Bullen, who had ceased publishing.

Pinker died at the age of 58 of pneumonia at the Hotel Biltmore in New York on 8 February 1922 after crossing on a transatlantic business trip. He left an estate of £39,365 (*Times*, 28 March 1922: 15). His *New York Times* obituary quotes a 'correspondent for the Times' who said of him:

He had few predecessors and absolutely no traditions in the whole business of literary agencies. He cut a road for himself, carving out his own land, and managed to help hundreds of his less successful follow-men in so doing. It was his kindliness of heart that brought him his final success; his judgement and decision were good, his knowledge of men was wonderful, but it was his personal sympathy with, and liking for, individuals that made him the exceptional human being he was. (*New York Times*, 5 March 1922: 58).

Frank Swinnerton described Pinker as a man who ‘...knew the monetary secrets of authors and the weaknesses of publishers, terrified some of these last and was refused admittance by others, dominated editors, and of course enjoyed much power’ (Swinnerton, *Autobiography* 128).

Gissing was not a gregarious man but he did have some few friends with whom he maintained relationships for many years. Letters to his friends are either addressed ‘My dear Wells’ or ‘My Dear H.G.’ or they lack a salutation altogether. Most letters to Pinker are addressed in the same manner. The volume of Gissing’s letters for the 1900-1902 period records 103 letters to Pinker. Two main reasons for this, of course, were because Gissing was now living in Paris, away from face-to-face meetings with his agent and publishers, and in one of his most productive periods. Pinker was very much in his confidence, with business letters exchanged weekly. The letters show that almost all of Gissing’s dealings with his publishers, the selection of illustrations, requests for proofs, and all the other details of publishing were now done only through Pinker, and not directly by Gissing with the publisher. Gissing also asked Pinker for many favours: help in finding addresses of correspondents and of removal companies to shift his books from Dorking to Paris, copies of books and trade journals to be used to establish backgrounds of novels, a map of ancient Gaul. Pinker always accommodated, charging when necessary or, as in the map of Gaul, obtaining a complementary copy from the publisher, John Murray. In the summer of 1899, the typescript of *The Crown of Life* was on a liner stranded off the Cornish coast on its way to America and Pinker went to much trouble in getting it back from the authorities. Gissing was much gratified that it was only lightly stained (Gissing, *London* 515). In May 1901, Gissing, at Pinker’s instance, came to London from France to sit for a photograph by Elliot and Fry for an article on Gissing in *Literature* (‘Literature Portraits XI - George Gissing’, 20 July 1901: 52). Gabrielle insisted on accompanying Gissing because of his health and they stayed

with Pinker and his wife. Given Gissing's reticence about his private life, even keeping his relationship with Gabriel from his family as long as he could, Gissing clearly considered Pinker a close friend, and not just his literary agent.

In contrast to his views of Watt and Colles, Gissing had the utmost confidence in Pinker. On 8 July 1900, Gissing, writing to Clara Collet, says of Pinker: 'Pinker does bravely. He has sold a lot of short stories for me, easily & well. It was a very good thing his getting my Calabrian sketches [*By the Ionian Sea*] into the Fortnightly' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 67). And on the same date, writing to W.H. Hudson, he says 'By the bye, Pinker, the agent, does my business admirably, & is a thoroughly good, conscientious, intelligent fellow. He got my Calabrian sketches into the Fortnightly – a stroke of luck. If ever you *want* an agent, Pinker is the man. You hear from him no offensive shop-talk. He can behave himself, & knows good work from bad' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 68-69).

All three agents did do the best they could for Gissing, securing rights and contracts that made his position more secure, but they were also constantly under pressure from Gissing to make sales as quickly as they could. He did not have the capital to wait and was under constant pressure to meet ever-growing expenses. Gissing was never able to have an income sufficient to prevent his worrying about his own future and the future of his family. Gissing kept an account of his earnings from 1880 to 1903 – his peak year was 1901, when he earned over £700; in most years he earned between £200 to £400. Writing to his sister Ellen in March 1899 about his finances, Gissing listed his annual commitments: he sent £100 to support his wife Edith and their second child, £40 to board his eldest son Walter with his sisters, a rent of £40, and medical expenses of £20. Gissing was anticipating £450 from sale of *The Crown of Life* to Methuen and Stokes, leaving him with £400 after commission. Deducting the expenses above he anticipated having only £200 left for the year, leaving little for someone who

was in poor health to set aside for his family and children (Gissing, *Collected Letters*, VII, 328).<sup>45</sup> Writing to his close friend Morley Roberts in February 1901, Gissing said 'I am in no way bound to Pinker, but he has done so well for me, & takes so much trouble, that I certainly shall not forsake him just now. For my last book he got £300 from Methuen & £100 from Stokes; moreover he manages 5 gnas a thousand for stories. I must let him well alone. ... What I aim at is to get a couple of thousand pounds safely invested for my two boys' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 11). Pinker also worked as agent for Algernon and said of him what he could also have said of Gissing: 'I have sold some of his books, but always in such a hurry that there was no time for terms. His work is above the common level, but the times are bad for such as he, and I don't know what one can do to help them.' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 329, note).

In his introduction to Gissing's diary, Pierre Coustillas provides an insightful analysis of Gissing's relations with his publishers and agents. Of his agents Coustillas said:

On balance there is no doubt that both Colles and Pinker helped substantially to promote Gissing's fame, and they would have obtained better terms for him had they been given more time to negotiate agreements. This applies in particular to serialisation, which could always be arranged, even in the case of an author who was by no means popular. But both agents mortgaged the future by thinking exclusively of the present – they aimed at getting the best possible prices within the time limits they were granted and this naturally involved the scattering of Gissing's works among a number of firms; the prospect of a collected edition receding accordingly (Gissing, *London* 7).

Without a steady and assured income, financial worries were always on Gissing's mind and show in his correspondence to Wells in January 1899, when he was finishing *The Crown of Life* Gissing wrote 'I am drawing to the end of a long novel which the brave Pinker will sell for me. I want money sorely (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 260).'

The publication date for *The Crown of Life* was to be 20 September and Gissing wrote to

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<sup>45</sup> In fact, it would be less, as Methuen only offered £300 for *The Crown of Life*. See Coustillas, *Definitive* 258.

Pinker that he expected him to arrange to have the funds delivered to him in Paris by the end of the month. Pinker sent Gissing his own cheque for £294 9s 4d. Gissing wrote to thank him, saying ‘When I received your cheque, I thought Methuen and Stokes had already paid. I ought to have known by this time a publisher’s sublime disregard of agreements’(Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 382). At the end of the year he had finished *By the Ionian Sea* and wrote to Pinker on 10 December 1899:

If nothing in the serial way can be done *by the end of this year*, I beg you will proceed at once to deal with the thing as a little volume. In that case please *sell* it for me, straight out, to anyone who will give the highest price – I mean, sell all the rights. As Bullen expressed a wish to have it, let him bid. The terms must be *payment on signature*. I want some money early in January, & I suppose one ought to get at least a couple of hundred pounds for the whole copyright – don’t you think so? Please do not wait a day longer than the end of the year.

By the bye, Fisher Unwin writes to me once a year, asking for a book. The *Ionian Sea* might perhaps be offered to him. But the question is, to get the most one can for the copyright. If Bullen will bid high enough, so much the better, as a new book might induce him to advertise the old (Gissing, *Collected Letters*, VII, 410-411).

In February 1900, he was writing in his diary that he was depressed by the Boer War and unhappy with his novel ‘and I wish I could afford to destroy it – but I am sore pressed for money. Have had to stand guarantee to Algernon for £100 with the Wakefield and Barnsby Bank’ (Gissing, *London* 523). A year later, Pinker was able to sell *Our Friend the Charlatan* to Chapman and Hall for £350 and had an offer from Holt in America for £150. Gissing wanted a spring publication but Holt objected to the earlier date, and would only advance the date if Gissing would accept a reduced offer of £100. Gissing records in his diary ‘Of course I accept this, as I cannot wait till autumn.’ (Gissing, *London* 535).

Pinker’s greatest failure was letting his personal antipathy towards William Heinemann prevent the transfer of Gissing’s novels from A. H. Bullen to another publisher. In 1899, A. H. Bullen dissolved his partnership with Lawrence, closing the firm of Lawrence and Bullen. Bullen originally tried to have the novels he owned the

rights to distributed through Heinemann. That agreement did not work out and Bullen issued all the Gissing titles the firm owned, except *Denzil Quarrier*, under his own imprint. With his now-limited resources, Bullen was not able to advertise or distribute the novels successfully. Gissing was at a loss, fearing that Bullen had gone out of business entirely, and in effect, taking nine of his novels (*Denzil Quarrier*, *The Odd Women*, *In the Year of Jubilee*, *Eve's Ransom*, *The Emancipated*, *The Unclassed*, *The Whirlpool*, *Born in Exile*, and *Human Odds and Ends: Stories and Sketches*) out of print with him.<sup>46</sup> He wrote to Pinker on 12 August 1900 (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 76) that he had not had his annual accounting from Lawrence & Bullen, 'So now at last even the small sum my books bought me every year will probably be unobtainable. Practically *no one* is publishing them, a nice state of things. I can quite understand that, at the present time, no publisher is eager to take up such books. I must look upon them, for the present at all events, as lost property.' In fact, Smith, Elder were still selling small numbers of all of the titles they held, although not to Gissing's financial benefit. Gissing finally got an account from Bullen in September for £7 17s. The account books Gissing kept show that his earnings from his Lawrence and Bullen titles brought him £9 17 in 1899, £7 17 in 1900, nothing in 1901 or 1902, and £12 15s in 1903. He also suffered a financial loss when Bullen tried to have the novels sold at a discount through a wholesaler, lessening Gissing's royalties. It may have been Bullen's failure that led Gissing and Pinker to negotiate contracts with a five- or seven-year lease of copyright, rather than an outright sale against an advance and royalties, signing contracts for five and seven year leases, starting with *By the Ionian Sea* in 1901. Stanley Unwin describes these 'terminable licenses' in *The Truth About Publishing* (72-73), noting that they are particularly suggested by one agent who he does not name and advising against them as taking away a

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<sup>46</sup> Lawrence and Bullen had purchased the copyright of *Born in Exile* in 1896 but did not publish it. Clara Collet purchased it from Bullen and sold reprint rights to Nelson in 1910 for £45. See Pierre Coustillas, 'Sidelights on Gissing's Publishing Career', *The Gissing Newsletter* 22.3 (1986): 28-29.

publisher's inducement to exploit the copyright fully and suggesting that the problems of a change in ownership could be dealt with by making other provisions.

Pinker had begun negotiations with Methuen in the spring of 1900 and at the end of May he had a discouraging reply:

24 May 1900

Dear Mr. Pinker

I am painfully conscious that I have delayed too long an answer to your letter of May. 9. about the transfer of George Gissing's books. My almost unconscious object in delaying has been a sort of hope that we might be able to make a fair offer for these books, but I regret to say that we don't see our way to make such an offer. The facts are these: The quires and bound stock of Lawrence and Bullen's books I value at not more than £125, and the goodwill of the books is worth a very small sum. It appears that in 1899 only 148 volumes of the eight books were sold, i.e. an average of 18 copies of each book. Though it is possible that we might be able to increase the sales to a certain extent, I cannot hope that we should be able to do so any really large extent. The sale of our own two books after the first three months is quite a small one.

The result of this is that we could only offer a small fraction of the sum originally named by Messrs L. & B. and I doubt whether they would care to consider this sum. If you wish it, however, I will name it. I am sorry to take up so pessimistic an attitude about Mr. Gissing's books, as I have the greatest admiration for his work, but we have to look at things to a great extent from a business point of view.

Yours sincerely

A.M.S. Methuen. (Lilly Library)

In September Bullen, still using Lawrence & Bullen, Ltd. letterhead, gave Pinker an accounting of their stock:

17.IX.1900

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I am sorry to be so late in sending you the particulars you wanted about Gissing's novels.

We have, I find –

Stereos of Denzil Quarrier

“ “ Odd Women

“ “ Eve's Ransom

“ “ Unclassed

“ “ Whirlpool

“ “ Emancipated

Moulds of Year of Jubilee

“ “ Human Odds & Ends

Copyright of Born in Exile (no plates or moulds; this book is to carry a royalty of 1/ per copy, if issued at 6/).

We will take £500 net for all our interest in Gissing's books – stock, plates, rights, and moulds.

Yours very truly,

A.H. Bullen

Pinker must have contacted other publishers but without success. Bullen wrote to Pinker on 23 October 1900 that 'Chatto & Windus do not want Gissing's books. Have you been able to see Mr. Reginald Smith [Smith & Elder] on the subject? The circle of possible purchasers is narrowing. It seems a pity that an author of Gissing's eminence should go a-begging. I am told that Macqueen would pay my price, but I don't for a moment suppose that Gissing would go to Macqueen' (Lilly Library). John Macqueen was a London publisher whose list was confined to popular novels. As it was not an old or literary publishing house, Bullen was right in that Gissing would not consider it.

In his diary for 6 October 1900, Gissing wrote: 'Pinker writes that Bullen wants to sell my books to Heinemann, who alone will offer the price he wants. At Pinker's advice (and in accordance with my own antipathy) I refuse Heinemann.' We do not know the source of Gissing's animosity towards Heinemann – there is nothing to indicate that Gissing had had any contact with him, so there may not have been any on a personal level. Perhaps Gissing saw him as the commercial antithesis of Bullen. Gissing followed up with two letters, the first to Pinker and a second letter for Pinker to show to Bullen:

6 Oct. 1900 to Pinker

My dear Pinker,



I send you herewith a formal answer to your letter concerning Bullen, which you may perhaps like to make use of. I am very sorry indeed to seem to behave in an unfriendly way to Bullen, very sorry to be the cause of however small a loss to *you*, but I really cannot think with the least satisfaction of my books getting into the hands of either Heinemann or Methuen. Considering that L&B have certainly not *lost* on all my publications taken together, I feel some surprise that they should not make a little concession to my interests; it is obvious that in the hands of almost any other house my books would have received greatly more advertisement. They really ought to think of this. Of course I know that B. himself is not free to act – there is the Company.

No; I am convinced it is better to wait a little. I cannot relinquish the hope of getting my books into the hands of some firm with whom it would be a satisfaction to me to have dealings. I feel sure you will manage this.

Many thanks for your replies to my various questions. You will receive this on Monday morning, so doubtless will not need to telegraph.

Sincerely yours,

George Gissing.

Thank you for your careful & detailed explanation of what has been going on. (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 94)

6 Oct. 1900

My dear Pinker,

I am very anxious indeed to give my books a new start with the public – their present buried condition being nothing less than a calamity. At the same time, I feel obliged to adhere to my decision that they must not pass into the hands of Heinemann. Naturally enough, I have a certain faith in the vitality of what I have written, & I cling to the hope that some publisher with whom I can be on terms of sympathetic understanding (as indeed I always was with Bullen himself) will have the courage to risk a little on my chances of conquering the public. If for the present we are at a deadlock, we must simply wait. You will, I know, regard this letter as final.

Sincerely yours,

George Gissing (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 95)

On the first of November 1900 Gissing wrote to Pinker regarding a proposal by Bullen to Gissing. Bullen proposed selling a quantity of Gissing's books to a wholesaler at a third of the published price of 2s per copy but which the wholesaler was to set at as high a price as they could. Bullen needed Gissing's approval to lower the royalty, with Gissing to receive a reduced royalty of 3d per copy (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 106). Gissing proposed to Pinker that he and Gissing become partners, with Pinker advancing funds against an interest in the books to bridge the gaps between Bullen's request for £500 for his interest and what publishers would pay. The two letters below

are quoted in full as they reflect Gissing's thinking about both the transfer of his books to a single publisher and his need to have his literary reputation and status recognized. He felt that not only did Methuen not advertise his books properly and missed taking advantage of the appeal of the anti-war message of the book to those opposed to the South African war. He was also appalled at appearing in Methuen's list with less-regarded novelists and in their uniform binding; even if he was not earning what he thought he deserved, at least he felt he should appear in his own livery. Gissing valued his reputation and felt it would be best served by established literary houses such as Blackwood, Bentley, or Smith, Elder.

10 November 1899

My dear Pinker,

I have been thinking about your last letter. The question of the transference of my books is of course a rather serious one, demanding all possible prudence. You would be the first to admit that nothing must be done which is not very plainly to my advantage—to my *permanent* advantage. And my literary position is so peculiar that the question of what would be really advantageous, & what not, becomes specially difficult.

With Lawrence & Bullen I have only one fault to find—that they do not think it worth while to keep up an advertisement of my books. The books have a very small sale from year to year; I may tell you that L.&B. have paid me (on a detailed account) about £10 per annum. This is trifling, but better than nothing at all. Obviously, then, one must be sure in the first instance that a transfer would bring me more than this annual £10.

Now as to Methuen. I will say plainly that I feel altogether dissatisfied with their mode of advertising *The Crown of Life*. Of course the moment is bad for the book-trade, but I am not at all convinced that it is fatal to the prospects of a book, which, with a little effort, might become the subject of a good deal of discussion—for there is an anti-war party in England, & this book should appeal to such people very strongly. Methuen, however, gives it no prominence in his list; plainly does not think it worth while to do so.

I have no exaggerated sense of the value of my own work, but one thing cannot escape my notice—that is very common for people writing about English fiction to mention my name among those of a few leading writers; & this has been the case for at least five years. Lawrence & Bullen, acting upon this view, gave my new novels special advertisement, as books which were likely to interest in a higher degree than the ordinary library novel. Methuen inserts me in a small-type list, together with writers who assuredly make no claim to literary distinction. — Well, I speak to you of this because, if Methuen has no real respect for my work, & no great hopes of its future, I very strongly object to his becoming my permanent publisher. It is all very well for him to reply that the

sale of my novels does not justify outlay on advertisement. The sale is not likely to increase until that part of the public which takes its taste at second-hand has been accustomed to the thought that my books are worth reading; & this can only be brought about by advertisement.

I am not foolish enough to expect that *unwilling* publishers can be made, by my protest, to spend their money on advertising. All I say is, that, unless a publisher is prepared to do this, I see no sort of advantage in transferring my books to him.

You mention Blackwood. Of course I rate the house of Blackwood vastly above Methuen, & should greatly prefer to be published by them. All my instincts & convictions are on the side of the old firms who have good literary relations. Very gladly I would have remained with Smith, Elder, had it been possible to live on what they paid me. And, by the bye, I notice that those of my books published my [sic] Smith are very much better known than those published by others — simply because all five novels appear constantly in Smith's page of advertisements. The sale is probably much above that of the books with L. & B. — a mere result of commercial tactics.

I wish to put it for your grave consideration: if Smith, Elder are unwilling either to make an arrangement for the surrender of the five books they hold, or to take my other books into their hands, is there real, solid advantage in making a change just now with regard to a portion of my work? Would it not be better to await the possible moment when a greatly increased sale of my books would make anything easier? After a struggle of twenty years, I can probably manage to struggle on for a few years more. —But this is submitted to your judgment. I merely want to make quite clear to you my own way of regarding the matter (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 401-402).

17 November 1899.

My dear Pinker,

Let it be granted (as Euclid says) that I have complete confidence in your zeal & your discretion. That goes without saying. I only want to make quite sure that I give you a full understanding of my wishes in this matter. They may not be practicable, & discussion sets things clearer light.

Is it certain that *Smith* would not take over Bullen's books? You do not mention this as a possibility. Perhaps you have already thought of it, & found it no use.

If so, I agree with you that the offer may be definitely set before Methuen. When you have planned out the whole thing, I shall be glad to consider it in detail.

Yes, I see the force of your argument for transferring whilst the books have no particular value. —What I meant was that a transfer now must necessarily have the result of cutting off all income from those nine books for some time to come; for I presume it is only in that way that an arrangement could be made with Methuen. Just at present I don't like the idea of losing even the smallest portion of my income. But I shall see what your suggestions are.

By the bye, when Bullen issued my volume of short stories — *Human Odds & Ends* — he retained, for future use, four stories; these must of course be

withdrawn<sup>47</sup>. I fancy I have enough to make another volume, & I shall think about it before long.

As to *The Crown of Life* the fatal mistake was not to have published it in the spring. One sees that more and more clearly. There was absolutely no valid reason for holding it over – & see the result! In future I shall stick more firmly to my own idea in the matter of date.

Of course there will be no undertaking to let Methuen have all future books. That would ruin one, by doing away with competition.

Then again, I shall decline to allow any novel of mine in future to be published in a *uniform*. Whether he likes it or not, Methuen must agree to give me a cover of my own, & not clothe the books in that offensive universal red. In his own interests, the thing is an utter mistake. Readers don't like this uniformity, & I marvel he has not already found that out.

In short – & this is the sum of my view & feelings – Methuen must agree to allow me that individuality among novelists which I have fought for so long & won by so many sacrifices. In any agreement, let this somehow be expressed. It is every bit as much in his interest as in mine. I think you will agree (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 403-404).

A month later, on 6 December 1900, Gissing wrote to Pinker (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 114) regretting that he had not agreed to the sale to Heinemann: 'This is a disappointment. You will understand me when I say that, things being thus, I begin to regret our rejection of Heinemann's proposal. It really looks as if he were the only publisher willing to take the books over. I know you do not like him; perhaps you have no dealings with him. I only mention the point because of the seriousness of the position in which I now find myself with regard to those lost novels.'

It is hard to understand the antagonism that Pinker and Gissing felt towards Heinemann. In Pinker's case, perhaps Heinemann's reference to literary agents as 'parasites' was sufficient, but it may go deeper than that. Although Frederic Whyte, in his 1928 memoir of William Heinemann, states that Heinemann, while never 'intimate' with Pinker, did deal with Colles, Pinker and Casenove 'while consistently holding aloof from A. P. Watt & Sons' (Whyte 123-128), others claim that Heinemann refused 'even to acknowledge Pinker's existence' (Anesko, 142). In 1904 Heinemann accused Pinker

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<sup>47</sup> The four stories were for Bullen to publish when he set up a separate house but they were published instead by Constable as *The House of Cobwebs* in 1906.

of improperly managing Conrad's finances, something that Pinker and Conrad vigorously denied, but it does indicate the depth of the ill-will between Pinker and Heinemann (Finkelstein 148). The Heinemann entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* says of him that 'His greatest weakness was a certain intellectual arrogance: he had a larger "blind spot" in his mental outlook than most men of his attainments, because he was human enough to be violently prejudiced by his own personal likes and dislikes'. Whyte's memoir, in talking about literary agents and Heinemann, and the loss of Henry James and Joseph Conrad, both of whom became Pinker's clients prior to leaving him for other publishers, describes Heinemann as 'Temperamental and excitable, very often unreasonable, he would, of course, in the ordinary course of things, have fallen out with some of them in any case. But with other publishers – incited by the meddlesome middleman – continually poaching upon his preserves, the retention of his most popular novelists had been difficult indeed' (Whyte 128). Heinemann also blamed Pinker for the publisher's loss of H.G. Wells, writing to Wells on 2 December 1903 that 'I was your first publisher and probably would still be if you hadn't put your affairs into Pinker's hands' (W.P Burns 80). Actually, Wells broke with Heinemann after Heinemann refused to pay the price Wells demanded for his next novel after Heinemann's publication of *War of the World*. The dislike was mutual; Pinker believed that Heinemann was concealing the actual sales of *War of The Worlds* and wrote to Wells on 26 July 1898:

'I have no doubt I can get three printers who will testify that it is usual to give the publisher overs, but that won't catch Heinemann. Why not boldly demand a printer's certificate with the royalty a/c? He cannot say it is unreasonable because some publishers send it as a matter of course. If the certificate does not show the overs the omission can be pointed out to Heinemann. There would certainly be some overs on an edition of 10,000. Of course if nothing else, if would be amusing to see the spluttering indignation of Heinemann, and Pawling's [Sidney Pawling, Heinemann partner] grief. If, as I think Mrs. Wells said, Heinemann pretends he has sold only 5000 of the War of the Worlds, I believe he is faking the a/c' (W.P. Burns 209).

Gissing had no personal contact with Heinemann. His only dealings with the firm were third-hand, as Lawrence & Bullen sold the colonial rights to Heinemann and continental rights to Heinemann and Balestier of Leipzig. Gissing's acceptance of Pinker's judgement is hard to understand, unless he saw in Heinemann something of a type of publisher, crass and commercial, that displeased him.

William Heinemann (1863-1920) started his business in 1890, with a capital of £500. During that same year he also started a German branch with Charles Wolcott Balestier (1861-1891), a young American whose sister later married Rudyard Kipling (Nowell-Smith 60). Heinemann's first book was Hall Caine's *The Bondman*, purchased for £300. It sold 450,000 copies and established both Caine's reputation and Heinemann's success. Within two years Heinemann was publishing more than 100 books and had Edmond Gosse as his reader and editor (Fritschner 151-157). As Adrian Poole suggests in *Gissing in Context* (Poole 144), Heinemann could easily have been the model for Jedwood, the publisher in *New Grub Street* who appealed to Milvain as the publisher of the day for a man like himself. Like Jedwood, Heinemann had worked for another publisher, Trübner, managing the firm after Trübner's death before starting his own venture.

Mr Jedwood was an energetic and sanguine man, who had entered upon his business with a determination to rival in a year or so the houses which had slowly risen into commanding stability. He had no great capital, but the stroke of fortune which had wedded him to a popular novelist enabled him to count on steady profit from one source, and boundless faith in his own judgment urged him to an initial outlay which made the prudent shake their heads. He talked much of 'the new era,' foresaw revolutions in publishing and book-selling, planned every week a score of untried ventures which should appeal to the democratic generation just maturing; in the meantime, was ready to publish anything which seemed likely to get talked about (*New Grub Street* 171).

The Gissing books held by Bullen remained with him after Gissing's death in 1903. In 1904 Bullen still had considerable stock, in quires, of Gissing's books and was

still negotiating with the family, through Pinker, to sell his interest. He listed his stock as follows (Lilly Library)

	Bound Stock	Quires	Stereos & Moulds
Whirlpool	28	880	Stereos
Unclassed	39	768	Stereos
Year of Jubilee	46	647	Moulds
Denzil Quarrier	35	431	Stereos
Emancipated	53	318	Stereos
Odd Women	43	472	Electros
Eve's Ransom	28	857	Electros
Human Odds & Ends	65	937	Moulds
	337	5301	

Bullen had reduced his price from £500 to £350 and on 19 July 1904 he wrote to Pinker that 'The sum that I ask for myself -- £350 -- is quite reasonable, but Hodder & Stoughton declined the offer and Macmillan also declined.' On the back is written, in pencil in another hand '£250 down and a royalty of £1 per thou on sixpenny editions. One edition of each of the books to be issued within six months of the transfer, at least four to be so issued. In the event of their not issuing sixpenny editions the right to do so reverts to Bullen' (Lilly Library). On 27 July Bullen announces that he has a publisher interested in issuing 6<sup>d</sup> editions of *The Unclassed* and *The Whirlpool*: 'He has made me a definite offer' but Bullen wanted to know if Pinker had any offers before he replied. Although Bullen did not name the publisher, Coustillas' bibliography (16) noted that there was a Routledge 6d edition of *The Unclassed in 1905*, with a royalty paid to Bullen of £1 per 1000, Bullen then paying a royalty to Clara Collet, who represented the estate and secured the rights to Gissing's titles from Bullen. There is no record of an edition of *The Whirlpool*, beyond the Sedgwick and Jackson editions issued in 1911 and 1915.

After Gissing's death on 28 December 1903, Pinker continued to represent his estate, with Algernon and Clara Collet as executors, selling Gissing's *Will Warburton* and his unfinished novel *Veranilda* to Constable and handling the difficult negotiations that

resulted when the family had a falling-out with H.G. Wells and refused to allow the preface that he had written to *Veranilda* to be included, substituting one by Frederic Harrison. The estate retained Colles' Authors' Syndicate in negotiating film rights in *The Town Traveller* and other Gissing novels in 1927.

By the end of the nineteenth century, publishing had become a complex affair. No longer was it a simple matter of author and publisher working together to sell a few hundred copies to London circulating libraries. There was now a mass-market for novels. The market also embraced potentially lucrative international rights sales and serial sales that could be negotiated by either the publisher or by the author through his agent. Within a few years sales in new media would also become available: *Demos* was made into a film in 1923, netting John Murray, Smith, Elder's successors, over £260 prior to the release of the film. Authors needed the professional skills and contacts of literary agents, just as others relied on the skills of lawyers to ensure that their interests would be properly served. Gissing's direct dealings with Smith, Elder cost him and his estate any chance of future earnings for reprints, foreign sales, translations, and other rights, but those earnings, except for the sale of the film rights to *Demos*, would not have been substantial, as we saw earlier. Similarly, Gissing ignored Colles' advice and continued with Lawrence & Bullen, a firm too small and too poorly run to pay him a suitable advance, market his books abroad on better terms, or promote his books at home. Without Colles and Pinker Gissing would not have been able to obtain the British, continental, and especially, American sales that he had, nor would he have been able to live abroad without Pinker handling his business affairs in England. As Simon Eliot says 'Agents are an absolutely vital part of literary history: the lynchpin that [begins] to explain how the selling and buying of books changed tremendously at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century' (Eliot, 'Victorian Value' 3). In this, and in his relations with



Watt, Colles, and Pinker, the three leading agents of the time, Gissing provides a prime example of their importance.

## Chapter 4: Changing Modes of Production: Gissing's Contracts

Between 1880 and 1903, the fundamental economic relationship between authors and publishers changed, leading, by the end of the nineteenth century, to modern practices and a change in the modes of production of Victorian novels. Feltes, in his Marxist analysis of production, saw the change as a transition from the 'petty commodity production of books to the capitalist production of texts' (Feltes, *Modes* 3). Capitalist production means the creation of surplus value – the book was no longer simply a product created by the author and printed and sold by the publisher: it had now become text, a marketable commodity that could appear in several forms and rights to it could be sold as a serial, foreign and other rights sales. Feltes discusses the reconstitution of power relations in publishing, which there certainly was, but not in the manner in which he interprets it. In his discussion of Dickens, Feltes makes too much of historical determination and too little of genius, which, for Feltes, is always in quotes, implying the negation or even a disbelief of its existence. Dickens was a genius in business as well as in letters, and his patterns and modes of publishing, detailed in Patten's excellent study, were much beyond what most authors would achieve.

Feltes sees the new forms of contract and the rise of the agent as depersonalizing the author/publisher relationship and on that point some contemporary publishers may have agreed. But Feltes also saw publishers' readers doing the same in acting solely to implement house policies that were now somehow part of an overall industry policy. Shillingsburg ('Editing' 61-65) is not convinced that Feltes is correct in this latter assumption, finding that Feltes provides no convincing proof for it and is instead substituting a Marxist viewpoint that puts authors and publishing into the position of cogs in the machine of capitalism for a 'positivist view of autonomous authors' and publishers. Borislav Knezevic (Knezevic 26) finds difficulty in equating the

middle-class Victorian author with the Victorian labourer, particularly in Feltes' discussion of Dickens. I find some of Feltes' argument here to be valid, if overstated. In looking only at Gissing's relations with his publishers, if what we are looking at is the 'control of production', the period during which Gissing published does demonstrate that shift: his first book was published at his expense, at half-profit, what Feltes terms a 'petty commodity' form of production. By the end of his career, indeed from the mid-1890s onwards, control had shifted to the publishers, but at the same time Gissing, through his agents, now negotiated the terms of his contracts. He also produced books on his initiative as sole creator, but also 'on hire', writing books and articles to produce what Feltes calls 'commodity texts' for various publishers' product lines. *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* (1898) was written at Blackie's request for Blackie's Victorian Era Series, then revised and the entire copyright sold by Gissing in 1901 to Blackie for republication by Gresham Publishing as part of a collected edition of Dickens' works. Two novels in 1895, *Sleeping Fires* and *The Paying Guest* were written for publishers' series, the former for T. Fisher Unwin's Autonym Library, 'to be original' and 'about 30000 words complete in itself' (New York Public Library). *The Paying Guest* was written for Cassell's Pocket Library, with instructions that the length be not less than 25,000 words, 'title to be arranged' (New York Public Library). Both demonstrate very well a commodity text: they were written for the new, cheap, one-volume market that appeared after the collapse of the three-decker the year before. The authors were hired, and, in Unwin's case, given an option to write anonymously if they preferred in his Pseudonym Library, and marketed as a branded commodity as a series rather than as a unique creation by an author. Gissing was not too troubled by writing for such markets, finding them profitable since Unwin paid £5 for a thousand words. Gissing only stopped looking at that market when he became 'disgusted' by the puffery of the Cassell series, their advertisements portraying him as a convert to 'cherry optimism' (Gissing,

*Collected Letters* VI, 76, 87). These two titles, unlike the rest of Gissing's work during the period after 1891, were sold outright, equated perhaps with the short stories Gissing was selling and probably reflect his opinions of a certain market for short material, distinct from his novels, which he now kept the rights to.

Driving the changes in this period were social, historical, technological, and economic forces that created a new market for books. It is the response of publishers and authors to those market changes that are important. This chapter will look at the growing sophistication in Gissing's contracts, driven by and entirely representative of his era. The contracts he signed show Gissing changing from an independent producer to a hired professional, but he still remained an autonomous author working within a growing and shifting market.

Feltes draws upon an 1898 guide for authors, written by Leopold Wagner, which advised readers that there were certain distinctions between publishers, dividing them into four classes: 'manufacturing or popular', 'editorial', 'speculative or "up-to-date"', and 'commission'.<sup>48</sup> The 'manufacturing' publisher put together his list primarily from out-of-copyright books, illustrated poetry or literary anthologies, popular foreign novelists, children's books, handy reference books, cookbooks, and occasional 'shilling shockers' from popular authors. The manufacturing publisher would seldom take a chance on new or original authors. The 'editorial' publisher moved in the opposite direction, and looked for new books that would return substantial sums over a period of years, while usually paying modest sums for the copyrights. In mentioning that those publishers would also undertake to publish an encyclopaedia, guide books, or a Badminton library, Wagner implies that he is talking of Smith, Elder; John Murray, and Longman. The 'speculative' publisher was aggressive, often new to the business, and

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<sup>48</sup> Leopold Wagner, *How to Publish a Book or Article and How to Produce a Play, Advice to Young Amateurs*, (London: George Redway, 1898).

willing to pay large sums to obtain star authors, a good characterization of Heinemann. The 'commission' publisher charged his authors for publication and never declined a work. While Wagner condemned them, he also recognized that more reputable publishers were also willing to publish on commission or on a 'share profits' basis (Wagner 62-70). Feltes simplifies Wagner's descriptions into 'list' and 'enterprising' publishers, the 'list' publishers displaying a 'petty-commodity' ideology while the 'enterprising' publishers were 'fully capitalist'. But Wagner also noted in his divisions that all of the publishing types could be found in one house. Feltes' distinctions oversimplify, rather than clarify, the changing complexities of late-nineteenth-century publishing, and while it may give us some more understanding if we consider the changes in capitalism during the period, his construct is too narrow and his model is too far removed from a more complex reality. Feltes (1993, 5-6) takes Keating to task for his 'objectivist' interpretation of the Society of Authors criticism of draft publishing contracts in the 1890s and proposes to put forward a 'dialectical' and more accurate account. Instead, he digresses to attempt a characterization of publishing as 'patriarchal', which it was, as he is discussing a patriarchal time. It could also be characterized as Christian or even as Evangelical, at a time that was both and provided the motivations behind much of what Bentley published or Mudie selected: patriarchy and Christianity were givens in the nineteenth century. Publishing contracts did change, but what we will see looking at Gissing's contracts is a shift driven partly by a capitalist market that was discovering a broader middle and working class readership and partly by publishing becoming an international enterprise that drove up the value of copyrights and required the active involvement of agents in negotiating contracts. The creation of new media such as serial publication in newspapers and magazines, dramatization and film rights, along with the growth in promotional licensing of titles and characters also increased the value of copyrights. And, finally, authorship had become a profession, with a

membership of 'authors, editors, and journalists' that grew from 3,400 in 1881 to 6,000 in 1891 and to 11,000 by 1901 (Gross 199). It also had its own society in the Society of Authors, and although the Society pressed for a standard form of contract and opposed the half-profits system because of its potential for fraud, it was the increasing number of authors hiring agents that forced new terms on the publishers. The shift from half-profit contracts to royalty contracts may reflect the shift to modern capitalist publishing, but it is the development of new markets and media, rather than the form of contract that marks the real change to capitalism.

Of the 27 books that Gissing sold, 9 were outright sales of the copyright and 14 were contracted as an advance against royalties. Of the remaining four, one was on shared profits and financed by Gissing, one on half-profits, one on a short-term copyright lease and royalty, and one on royalty and a payment. Advances dominated his contracts after 1892, with only two outright sales after that time, both for novelettes written on commission. The economic instrument of production, the author's contract, changed from a verbal agreement or informal letter, confirmed by a simple receipt, to increasingly elaborate contracts that carefully exploited or reserved rights to each party. In 1879, even so large and sophisticated a firm as Macmillan could wait for almost a year after publishing Henry James' *French Poets*, before issuing a half-profits contract for that title and *Daisy Miller*, *The Europeans*, and *The American*. The agreement, reproduced in Anesko (after p. 40), is printed rather than hand-written but is still a very simple one-page document with blanks left for names and the proportion of the share of the profits, with no reference to foreign or other rights. James' preference for a royalty and an advance were 'terms ... utterly foreign to English publishers at this time'(Anesko 54).

When Ernest Spon issued his guide to authors in 1872, he described a variety of contracts, the most common ones being outright sale, a royalty on copies sold, half-

profits, shared risk, and publishing by commission.<sup>49</sup> Sprigge, in 1891, listed outright sale, royalty, half-profits, and commission publishing.<sup>50</sup> Clarence E. Allen, in his 1897 guide to keeping publisher's accounts, listed six types of contract: outright sale or assignment, royalty, half-profits, and commission, but also added agreements for the publication of one edition or a new edition of a book.<sup>51</sup> Allen described the half-profits system as the most common. There were further variations, for example, Doyle selling *The White Company* to Smith, Elder on a contract that returned two-thirds of the profits to him, and James Payn selling his books by edition and on a one-year lease of the copyright.<sup>52</sup> All these forms of agreements would still remain by the time the fourth edition of Stanley Unwin's *The Truth About Publishing* appeared in 1946 (a fifth edition was published in 1947), but the royalty system seems to dominate, at least for fiction, after the 1890s (Anesko 37).<sup>53</sup> Philip Gaskell called the royalty agreement 'a natural extension of profit sharing [that] began to supersede it around the 1860s' (Gaskell 299). In his study of Bentley, Gettmann thought the royalty system had the advantage of relieving the publisher of the obligation to pay the author before the book became profitable, while giving the author a share in a successful book (Gettmann, Victorian 115). Bentley's earliest royalty offer was in 1857, but his first signed agreement was not until 1885, for Mrs Lynn Linton's *Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland*, paying £250 outright and a royalty after the first 1,000, but there is no mention if the £250 was paid as an advance against royalties. Bentley, according to Gettmann, paid a range of royalties, but only after the first 1,000 (p. 117).

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<sup>49</sup> Ernest Spon, *How to Publish a Book, Being Directions and Hints to Authors*, (London: E. & F.N. Spon, 1872).

<sup>50</sup> S. Squire Sprigge, *The Methods of Publishing*, (London: Society of Authors, 1891).

<sup>51</sup> Clarence E. Allen, *Publishers' Accounts: Including a Consideration of Copyright and the Valuation of Literary Property*, (London: Gee & Co., 1897).

<sup>52</sup> See Chapter 2 for the Doyle publication and a sample of what Tinsley called Payn's standard contract.

<sup>53</sup> However Anesko, in his note [38, p. 209] claims that royalty agreements were not mentioned in publishing manuals as late as 1882, when in fact, they were.

To Hepburn, it was the royalty system, together with the rise of the literary agent, that 'set the seal on the improved bargaining position of authors (Hepburn 14). Sprigge discusses three types of royalty commonly used by 1891: the author was offered a fixed royalty on all copies, the author was offered a royalty on all copies sold after a certain number, or the author received a royalty after the cost of production was covered (Sprigge 48). Keating refers to the second and third types as a 'deferred royalty' that did not begin paying until a certain number had been sold, usually 1,000 on a six-shilling edition. Keating also mentions another type, a 'rising royalty', which called for increasing royalties at various levels of sales (426). Certainly, by the time Ernest Spon published his guide to authors in 1872, the royalty system was known in Britain and favoured. Spon described it as 'a more satisfactory plan ... for the author to accept a certain fixed sum upon each edition, or upon a certain number of copies of his work as its sale progresses. This system is termed a royalty, and when a royalty is accepted by an author the copyright belongs to the publisher, but it is always held subject to the payment of royalty' (Spon 2). In Sprigge (1891) and Wagner (1898), royalty was defined as a payment only on a certain number of copies sold, usually after some initial sale that was not subject to royalty. Allen described the system as one where the author retained the copyright, royalty being paid for publication 'generally for a given period or a given number of editions' (Allen 18). The American understanding of the royalty system was also based on the reservation of a certain number of copies before royalties were paid, although Putnam in both editions of his guide to authors (1885 and 1897) has copyright remaining with the author under a royalty system, while in England the fact of publication meant the publisher had copyright as long as royalty was paid or the author otherwise reserved it. For successful books, the royalty spared the publisher the notoriety of an Archdeacon Farrar episode,<sup>54</sup> or the payment of lump sums to assuage

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<sup>54</sup>Archdeacon Frederic William Farrar (1831–1903), dean of Canterbury was commissioned by Cassell in



the publisher's conscience, as Smith made to Brontë, or the payments Bentley made to his more successful authors (Gettmann, Victorian 84). The half-profits system was attacked by Besant and Sprigge because of the possibility of abuse by publishers misstating their costs and the difficulty of authors getting access to their accounts. As an author's royalties approached 25% they could amount to more than half the publisher's profit (Sprigge 60).

Americans also paid royalty on the retail or published price, while British authors were often paid on the wholesale price, or on the '13 as 12' discount. Gissing's contracts with Lawrence and Bullen were on the 13 as 12 system while the agreement for the Dodd Mead American edition of *The Paying Guest* was for 10% on 'the retail price of each and every copy'. The calculation of the royalty on the wholesale price was opposed by Besant and others, as it clouded the accounting, and it finally fell out of favour. Colles struck out the 13 as 12 clause that was printed in the contract with Methuen for the 1898 edition of *The Town Traveller*, but it remained in the 1901 contract for the sixpenny edition, probably because of the short margin on those books. The royalties for *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* and *Will Warburton* were based on the published price.

Gissing twice signed agreements in which he sold his rights for a limited time or limited edition, with royalty payments to commence after a certain number were sold. In 1884, Chapman offered £50 to Gissing for a three-year lease of the copyright of *The Unclassed*, along with a royalty of five shillings on every copy sold beyond 400. In the

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1870 to write a *Popular Life of Christ*. He was initially paid £500 for the copyright and given £100 in addition to travel to Palestine. The book proved an immense success after it was published in 1873 and Cassell made additional voluntary payments of £200 in 1874, £350 in 1875, £200 in 1876, £250 in 1877, £205 in 1878, and £100 in 1881, along with another £100 to create an index. They subsequently gave him £2000 and royalties on his *Life of St. Paul*, after another house had bettered their original offer of £1000. By 1890 he had earned over £2,333 in royalties on the St Paul book and had published another, less successful book with Cassell. In 1890, Farrar gave a speech attacking 'sweating publishers, who... would toss to the author perhaps a hundredth part of what, by bargains grossly inequitable, they had obtained'. See the *Times*, 8 Oct. 1890, p. 6 for a letter from Farrar and the reply from Cassell, and the *Times* of 31 Oct 1890, p. 8, for comments by Besant and Sprigge.

end, Gissing was paid only £30 by Chapman, whom he called a ‘scoundrel’ and ‘unspeakable’ ( Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 332; II, 200, 364; III, 10, 47). However, Gissing still owned the copyright and in 1895, Lawrence and Bullen purchased it on an advance of fifty guineas and a shilling per copy royalty. It brought Gissing an additional £66 19s in copyright, royalty and foreign rights sales. As mentioned earlier, *Thyrza* was sold for £50 and a royalty of 10% on any copies sold beyond 500. However, there was no attempt to bring out a second edition until after Gissing sold his entire copyright to Smith in 1891 for £10.

There is no record of when the modern concept of royalty payments coupled with an advance was begun. The advance or payment on account of future royalties gave the author the funds he needed to live until his next sale, along with a future income on a successful book. It lessened the publisher’s risk as the advance had to be earned, and so, for many books, there would be no further payment, or at least they would be delayed for many years. Spon, Sprigge, Putnam, and Unwin do not mention advances at all in their guides, but Sprigge, in a letter to the *Times* in 1890 in reference to Archdeacon Farrar, advises that had the Archdeacon come to the Society of Authors (had they existed in the 1870s) they would have advised him to ask for a 20% royalty and count his original payment against it (*Times* 13 October 1890: 8). So the method was certainly known and used by 1890.

In 1892, Lawrence and Bullen became the first publishers to offer Gissing a contract with an advance against royalties and with not only an advance, and royalties, but also half-profits on foreign rights sales. After his previous experiences, Gissing felt spoiled by sudden generosity on the part of his publishers, to the extent that he turned down payments he was entitled to. Lawrence and Bullen paid Gissing £150 on account for *The Whirlpool* and sold the American rights to Stokes for £50. When Bullen offered half-profits on the American sale to Gissing, he wrote back that he was ‘uncomfortable

about this American money.’ and that ‘in the end £25 ... will not matter very much.; suggesting it be spent on advertisements (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VI, 259). In a letter of 22 April 1897 to Gissing (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VI, 276), Bullen enclosed the agreement but accepted Gissing’s suggestion to spend the £25 on advertising. Gissing seems to have forgotten his role in the matter as he later wrote Colles, perhaps, disingenuously, that the rights to *The Whirlpool* were carelessly ‘given away’ to America and he did not know if it was published there (Gissing, *Collected Letters*, VII, 61). The advance, royalties, and shared profits Gissing enjoyed from Lawrence and Bullen did not, unfortunately, act to his advantage. If Gissing’s market value in the early 1890s was £150, based on his sales to Smith, Elder of *The Nether World* and *New Grub Street*, Bentley’s purchase of *The Emancipated*, and A.C. Black’s purchase of *Born in Exile* at that price, then his sales to Lawrence and Bullen at less than that were under market, unless they returned royalties that would equal it. Despite Lawrence and Bullen being generous with their royalties, paying a fixed sum of four shillings on a three-volume novel and a shilling on the one-volume, the equivalent of a 26% to 29% royalty on the wholesale price or 13% to 17% on the published price, the royalties and sales did not offset the low advance. Lawrence and Bullen did pay Gissing 150 guineas (£157 4s) for *The Whirlpool* but only 50 to 100 guineas for his other titles. Of those only one of the six earned Gissing more than £150. This was probably why Colles was so against Gissing dealing with Bullen – they simply did not pay as much, probably could not pay as much, nor promote as heavily, as Smith and the other publishers. The novels did sell, but slowly. It took four years for the Lawrence and Bullen edition of *The Unclassed* to earn its advance, three years for *Denzil Quarrier*, four years for *In the Year of Jubilee*, and, and five years for *Human Odds and End* to earn their advances. It cost Lawrence and Bullen £155 to produce 1,500 copies of *The Emancipated*, including Bentley’s fee and advertising. Even though the first printing was almost entirely sold within the first year, most of the

sales were Continental and colonial: it took four more years before it earned enough to pay Gissing his shilling a copy royalty. Only *The Odd Women* earned back its advance within a year. Once the advance had been earned, all his novels paid annual sums to Gissing and his estate. Gissing's titles with Lawrence and Bullen brought him advances, half-profits and royalties that totalled £778 17s 5d by 1903. Had he sold each copyright outright for £150 he would have had £900, £121 more:

Title and Advance	Total with Royalties
<i>Denzil Quarrier</i> (paid £105)	£133 14s 5d
<i>The Odd Women</i> (paid £105)	£165 9s 5d
<i>In the Year of Jubilee</i> (paid £105)	£137 9s
<i>Eve's Ransom</i> (paid £52)	£96 3s 1d
<i>The Whirlpool</i> (paid £157 4s)	£166 19s 6d
<i>Human Odds and Ends</i> (paid £78 15s)	£79 2s

See Appendix Table 2 for statements of Gissing's Lawrence and Bullen accounts.

Gissing's contracts with his publishers followed the developments in contract offerings, as he went from shared risks with half-profits, to half-profits, outright sale, outright sale with an advance against royalties, and limited-term sale.

The terminable license or lease of a copyright for a certain number of years often became a sort of book sabbatical contract, returning the copyright to the author after seven years. It was popular with several writers. Wilkie Collins leased his novels for seven years (Weedon, *Victorian Publishing* 148) and H.G. Wells proposed that it be written into law so that 'Every seven years his book would come back into his control, to suppress, revise, resell, or do whatever he liked to do with it' (Wells 383). Pinker inserted a seven-year clause in Gissing's contracts and even managed to get a five-year clause in the agreement with Chapman for *Our Friend the Charlatan*. The seven-year clause assuaged Gissing's fears of having his novels still in print but unavailable, as they were with Bullen. It also showed the change in his earning power, as he was not only getting larger advances and bigger royalties but also gaining the confidence of publishers

who were assuming that they would be able to recoup the advance within seven years. Unwin, in the 1947 edition of *The Truth About Publishing*, observed that limited-term copyright sales were still suggested, ‘particularly by one agent’ (Unwin 72), but he thought that ‘less drastic’ means could be taken to protect an author in the case of an ownership change. Pinker’s contracts for Gissing took ownership change into account. What he and Gissing were worried about were publishers like Bullen, who could keep a novel in print but who were unable or unwilling to promote its sales. There is, however, an undated pencilled note on the back of the agreement for *Will Warburton*, signed in 1903, that there was a ‘£40 unearned advance terminable under 7 years clause’. The seven-year clause specified that ‘This agreement may be determined [terminated?] by either party at any time after the expiration of seven years from the date of first publication’ (New York Public Library). As the Lilly Library and Quaritch catalogues note, Constable sought to publish a six-shilling edition of *Will Warburton* in 1911 to earn back the 1903 advance (Freeman, 62; *George Gissing 1857-1903*, 40). Constable published *Will Warburton* in sixpenny editions in 1908 and in a shilling edition in 1915. There had also been some misunderstanding over the advance, Pinker believing it to be for £350, Constable to have noted £300. Eventually the £300 was agreed upon after Pinker had sold serial publication rights.

Gissing’s existing contracts show subtle written and physical changes that reflect the maturing of publishing, its internationalization, and the increasing dominance of the agent. Smith, Elder’s early receipts for Gissing’s books were originally hand written, the latter ones were printed, with the print later modified with additional language to cover foreign sale. They were modified again when the 1891 American copyright law was passed to cover American sales. With Smith and with Bullen, Gissing acted solely on his own. By the end of the 1890s, Gissing had turned most of his negotiations over to his last literary agent, J.B. Pinker, and Gissing’s last contracts are all on blue stationery, all

following the same format, and all prepared by Pinker's office. The contract had changed from the simple gentleman's agreement of the 1870s to the complex and legalistic instrument of the 1890s, and from being a publisher's convenience to an instrument to protect the author's interest in his work.

## Chapter 5: The 'Triple-headed Monster': The Economics of the Three-Volume Novel

In the concluding chapter to her study of Mudie's circulating library, Guinevere Griest calls the demise of the three-volume novel the 'end of an era' (Griest 213). If any one thing can stand as a dividing line between the old world of publishing and the new, it was the end of the three-volume novel, a format that distinguished British fiction for almost seventy-five years and was the cornerstone of the circulating libraries during the second half of the nineteenth century. During its reign most first editions of novels were issued in three-volumes at 31s 6d and sold to circulating libraries. Novels that were successful would then appear in progressively cheaper editions at 6s and 3s 6d after a year or more had elapsed. As the public demand for novels grew, publishers shortened the period between the three-volume edition and the less expensive editions to six months or less. The increased number of novels and the availability of affordable editions seriously affected circulating libraries and in 1894 the two largest circulating libraries, Mudie's and W.H. Smith, refused to purchase any more three-volume novels and the format died shortly thereafter.

It is argued by Griest, Sutherland, and others that the three-volume novel survived because it returned a guaranteed profit to the publisher and made it possible for new authors to appear on the market (Griest 35-57; Sutherland, 'Economics' 28-29; Keating 424-425; Roberts 3). Using illustrations from Gissing and elsewhere, this chapter will show that the three-volume novel neither guaranteed profits nor benefited new novelists. It was an artificially priced format unique to Britain and it was its price and its format that ultimately killed it.

The three-volume novel generally ran to 300 pages per volume. Bentley had a prescription for it as being '920 pages long, with twenty-one and a half lines on each page and nine and a half words in each line' (Jones, 157). To expand the text to fill the

volumes, the novels were printed with wide margins, dropped chapter headings, and fewer lines per page, each separated by much leading. Authors short on skills in describing place or character favoured inserting as much dialogue as possible. Numerous chapters, with their headings dropped to mid-page and endings above mid-page would add to the length. Reardon, calculating the time it would take him to finish a three-volume novel estimated that:

Sixty written slips of the kind of paper he habitually used would represent--- thanks to the astonishing system which prevails in such matters: large type, wide spacing, frequency of blank pages--- a passable three-hundred-page volume. (*New Grub Street* 126).

Some of the padding can be seen in the differences between English and American editions of the same novel. Marryat's *Japhet in Search of a Father* (1836), published originally as a serial without chapter divisions, was pirated in America and divided into 19 chapters. When the British three-volume publication appeared the novel was divided into 79 chapters, adding an extra 79 pages (Lauterbach and Lauterbach 274-275). Excluding *Workers in the Dawn*, Gissing's three-volume editions are, on average, 900 pages (300 pages per volume), compared to their one-volume editions at an average of 434 pages. The exception, *Workers in the Dawn*, ran well over 300 pages per volume, prompting Remington to ask that each volume be shortened by half (Gissing, *Collected Letters* I, 247). *Born in Exile* ran under 300 pages in length and Gissing wrote an additional chapter after he saw the proofs in order to add an additional 20 pages to volume three (Coustillas 2005, 138).

The three-volume format had been in existence long before *Kenilworth*, long enough certainly for William Henry Ireland in his 1815 *Scribbleomania; or, the Printer's Devil's Polichronicon* to satirize the 'three-decker' novel and its popularity among the 'misses, wives, widows' who frequented the circulating libraries (Ireland 154). Called 'three-deckers' in reference to the imposing British warships, they were the bane of



authors, but the quantitative standard to which they had to write, as the circulating libraries preferred them and reputations were built on them and not on one-volume novels. Sir Walter Scott's *Kenilworth*, published in January 1821 in three volumes post octavo at a guinea and a half, set the price and format for new books that were to last until 1894. To Gissing they were the 'triple-headed monster', the 'procrustean system', the 'interminable desert' that forced him to write novels of a length and form that were a torture to him (*New Grub Street* 215; 168; 49). For Gissing, as for Reardon in *New Grub Street*, they were seen as an economic necessity: the three-decker paid more than the one or two-volume novel, even though that same three-volume novel would appear within a year in a one-volume format. In *New Grub Street* Milvain assures Reardon that his new novel was very good, only 'The misfortune was that you had to make three volumes of it. If I had leave to cut it down to one, it would do you credit.'

Milvain began to expatiate on that well-worn topic, the evils of the three-volume system. 'A triple-headed monster, sucking the blood of English novelists. ...' 'For anyone in my position,' said Reardon, 'how is it possible to abandon the three volumes? It is a question of payment. An author of moderate repute may live on a yearly three-volume novel--I mean the man who is obliged to sell his book out and out, and who gets from one to two hundred pounds for it. But he would have to produce four one-volume novels to obtain the same income; and I doubt whether he could get so many published within the twelve months.' (*New Grub Street* 215)

Prior to the 1890s, Gissing saw the three-decker as the only possible publishing medium: one-volume novels did not pay enough nor did they have the status of a three-volume novel: Mr Sykes, an alcoholic journalist in *New Grub Street*, regrets the 'evil day [he] began to write three-volume novels, aiming at reputation' (*New Grub Street* 404). To Gissing, both were important: 'Tomorrow I begin my new book, which will be called "Demos". Alas, it must be three vols'. (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 362-63). In a letter to Bertz in 1891 Gissing wrote 'I do wish I could have done with 3-vol. Novels, & publish henceforth in a rational way. But I fear the money-question will forbid it.' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 332). Keating (425-428) imagines that Reardon would have been

worse off economically after the end of the three-volume novel, estimating that Reardon would have had to sell 5,000 copies of a novel to earn the £150 he would get for a three-decker. Gissing's income actually went up after the end of the three-decker because the publishers would print 5,000 copies: Methuen printed that number of *The Town Traveller* on an advance of £250, with royalties of 20% on the first 2,500, 25% on any above and 4% on colonial sales. Their statement of 1 May 1899 shows sales of 2,940 in Britain and 1,188 of the Colonial edition, leaving an outstanding balance of £47 4s against the advance. At the end of June 1899 the balance was down to £42 13s 4d and although Gissing's own accounts do not show him receiving any royalties from *The Town Traveller* from Methuen, the end of the three-volume novel did not mean an end to £150 or higher payments for authors (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 345-346; 356).

As with other novels, Gissing's were set in type so as to increase the number of pages. One example will serve to illustrate the padding of Gissing's novels: The first edition of *In the Year of Jubilee* was printed on thick paper with 236 pages in the first volume, 266 in the second, and 268 in the third, for a total of 770 pages. There are 23 lines to a page, spaced at 4mm between bottom baseline and top baseline, 2.2 cm side margins, and 3 cm bottom margins. The top margin is 1.5 cm to the title heading and 2.2 cm to the top of text base. Initial chapter numbers are dropped 4.2 cm. Side margins are 2.6 cm for paragraphs and dialog is obviously filling space. There are twelve blank pages: each of the six parts of the novel are introduced by a separate page, blank on the recto. Each part consists of six to eight chapters, for a total of 43. The three-volume edition was followed by a 443-page one-volume edition, unrevised as to text but 327 pages shorter.

Gissing had eleven novels appear in three-volume editions, including *A Life's Morning*, which he had written as two volumes but which was published in three. *Isabel Clarendon* was written as a three-volume novel but at Meredith's suggestion, was

rewritten for two-volume publication (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 312). They generally followed what was the standard of the time: limited printings of 500 to 750 copies for Smith, Elder; 1,000 for Bentley, with thirty to sixty copies sent out for review and as author's copies and five sent to the copyright deposit libraries in England, Scotland, and Ireland.

The three-volume first edition was primarily a library edition, sales to individuals being few, as the 31s 6d price – approximately equivalent today to £150 – put new three-volume editions beyond the reach of all but the richest.<sup>55</sup> Copies existing today in private collections without the tell-tale circulating library label were more likely to have come from the fifty to sixty review copies that publishers sent out, or remainder copies, rather than the dozen or so that were sold to individuals. The price and format favoured the circulating libraries: for most of the year their subscribers would have exclusive access to the latest fiction. Guinevere Griest's definitive study of Mudie's Select Library suggests that the circulating library membership was limited because of the subscription rates. She quotes the *Spectator* ('The Numbers of the Comfortable', *Spectator* 30 November 1872: 1518) that there were only an estimated 60,000 families in a land of 4.6 million who could afford a library subscription (Griest 79). Mudie's rates were set at a guinea a year for London subscribers to borrow one volume at a time. Two volumes would cost 31s 6d, but for two guineas you could borrow four volumes, or have delivery in London of three volumes. Country subscribers could have four volumes of new books for two guineas, or six volumes of older books. For three guineas you could have eight volumes, and subscriptions were available for more volumes. The Grosvenor Gallery Library subscription rate was competitive with Mudie: two volumes for a guinea,

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<sup>55</sup> See the Introduction for a fuller discussion of Victorian prices, where I contend that in purchasing power, a shilling in 1890 bought what £5 would today, making the shilling novel about the level of today's mass-market paperback, the 6s novel about the cost of today's £30 hardcover, and the three-volume novel selling at five times that price. Griest (43) also says that three-volume novels had 'virtually no market except the circulating library.'

three volumes for £1 11s 6d, four volumes with free London delivery for two guineas.<sup>56</sup> Gissing, when he was in London and could afford a subscription, used the Grosvenor Gallery and later the London Library (Baggs, 10). Based on figures from the Smith, Elder and Bentley ledgers, the common practice was that Mudie's would take the largest number of copies, paying 15s for the set, with the standard 13 sold as 12 for an additional discount, making the actual price per title 14s 6d. The other circulating libraries would take a number that among them would about match Mudie's, and a dozen or so would be sold to the trade, usually at 22s 6d and sometimes at 18s. Within a year of issue (and in *New Grub Street's* case, five months), the one-volume reprint, selling at 6s would appear and any unsold copies of the three-volume edition would be remaindered by the publisher. Although Simon Eliot indicates that there was pressure to issue the first one-volume edition of a novel at 3s 6d (Eliot 1985), the normal practice was to issue in 6s editions first, only going directly to a 3s 6d edition if the publisher felt that a novel's previous appearance as a serial would hurt sales of the more expensive 6s edition. This was true for *A Life's Morning*, first serialized in *The Cornhill Magazine*, and for two of the books Eliot cites as having their first reprints at 3s 6d; Trollope's *The Duke's Children*, serialized in *All the Year Round* and Mrs Oliphant's *Kirsteen*, serialized in *Macmillan's Magazine*. For Gissing's three-volume first editions, see Appendix Table 3.

Mudie may have had as many as 50,000 subscribers at one time but by the time of his death in 1890, Mudie was down to 25,000 subscribers, while his major

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<sup>56</sup> There were two Grosvenor libraries – the original, at Chapel Street, Belgrave Square, had been in business for ten years, sued an 1880 start-up on Bond Street that used the same name, forcing it to change its name to the Grosvenor Gallery Library. (*Publishers' Circular*, 1 March 1880, p. 158). In 1884 the Grosvenor Gallery was 'wound up' by its creditors. It had 150,000 books, and had spent £34,000 since it started in 1879. one-third, mostly surplus copies had been sold for £5,000 (*Publishers' Circular*, 2 June, 1884, p. 518). It survived in liquidation and was still advertising in *The Times* as late as 1894, although its display ads stopped in 1887.

competitor, W.H. Smith had 15,000 in 1894 ('Mudie's Library: The Last Of A Famous Institution,' *Times* 12 July 1937: 12).

The reason the libraries favoured three-volume novels was not that they earned more money on each volume: earnings were dependent on subscriptions, not on circulation, and subscriptions were dependent on having stock that would attract subscribers. Nor did they favour the three-volume novel because it could serve more subscribers: purchasing three one-volume novels at a wholesale cost of 13s 6d or less for the three would have been more economical than the cost of one three-volume novel, even with the 13 as 12 discount of 14s 6d. The only logical reason for the libraries to favour the three-volume format for novels was because it forced subscribers to take the two-guinea subscription, as most seem to have done. In *New Grub Street* when Milvain asked why the circulating libraries did not want one-volume novels, Reardon replied, 'Profits would be less, I suppose. People would take the minimum subscription' (*New Grub Street* 215). According to a contemporary account of a visit to Mudie's in Oxford Street in 1894 from 1,000 to 1,200 parcels, representing some 5000 to 6000 volumes in total were shipped out each day. Although that number would include purchases as well as circulating volumes, it would also indicate that subscribers were taking more than one volume at a time (Preston 28). Eliot's study of the W.H. Smith records (Eliot, 'Bookselling') shows that W.H. Smith received £34,657 in subscriptions in 1894, an average of £2 3s 6d, making the normal subscription two guineas.

Gissing subscribed to circulating libraries when he was living in London, Exeter, and elsewhere (Baggs 7-13). He also used public libraries, even choosing a place to live by its closeness to a good library, but found that while public libraries had ample periodicals they lacked current fiction (Baggs 9-11). In his diary entry of 15 March 1888, he records that he took a year's subscription to the Grosvenor, found the librarian

recognized his name, and took out Thomas Hardy's *The Woodlanders* (Macmillan, 1887), apparently all three volumes as he finished it the next day (Gissing, *London* 24)<sup>57</sup>. In subsequent entries he talks of taking out at least two and often three novels: on May 4th he took volume 1 of Vernon Lee's *Juvenilia* (T. Fisher Unwin, 1887) and presumably the two volumes of Mary Adelaide Walker's *Eastern Life and Scenery* (Chapman and Hall, 1886), going back for the second volume of Lee and volume 1 of Hardy's *Wessex Tales* (Macmillan, 1888) four days later (Gissing, *London* 27-28). In his diary for 29 February 1888 Gissing records that he had subscribed to Gowland's Library while on holiday in Eastbourne and had in the last 'fortnight read a lot of recent novels': Hall Caine's *Deemster* (3 vols, Chatto & Windus, 1887), Rhoda Broughton's *Second Thoughts* (2 vols. R. Bentley & Son, 1880), the first volume of Lynn Linton's *Ione* (3 vols. Chatto & Windus: London, 1883), Corelli's *Romance of Two Worlds* (2 vols. Richard Bentley & Son, 1886), along with *Martin Chuzzlewit* (Gissing, *London* 22). In Exeter in 1891, he joined the Exeter Literary Society (Gissing, *London* 248). In 1897, when he was reading historical materials extensively for background on *Veranilda*, he joined the London Library, paying £3 for his subscription (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VI, 303).

The circulating library sales and reorders gave publishers a chance to see what was popular and, at sales to the libraries at 15 shillings a set, a bestselling novel could have a large return and at least help them to gauge the sales potential of cheap editions. Most novels were not bestsellers, however, and Gissing's certainly were not. Smith, Elder lost money on two of the three-volume editions of his novels: *New Grub Street* lost over £16 on sales of 447 copies and *The Nether World* lost almost £45 on sales of 371. Bentley lost over £23 on the sale of 497 copies of *The Emancipated*. None of the three were the sorts of novels to be popular with Mudie's readers, who preferred romance to realism. The three-volume library edition was also expensive to produce: not only were

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<sup>57</sup> The one volume edition was not published until 1889.

printing costs high but this was also the edition that the author's copyright payment was charged to. For established authors, that payment was a major cost to the publisher. As a novice novelist, Gissing was to have been paid £50 for *The Unclassed* (1884), with a royalty, but in the end only received £30 from Chapman. For *Isabel Clarendon* (1886), written as a three-volume novel but published, after much revision, in two volumes, Gissing actually received nothing from his half-profit contract with Chapman. All of the novels for which he was paid £150 lost money on their three-volume editions.<sup>58</sup>

Gissing's own concept of the economics of the three-volume novel was presented in an 1891 letter to his brother:

A word or two about the Smith & Elder matter. A short time ago, Roberts & I made a calculation of the publisher's profits on a 3-vol. novel, & we were startled to find how very small they are in the case of books which have no great success. Now the sale of my novels is assuredly small; if the publishers gave a large sum, they would have to count for recoupment upon a steady sale for some years, which of course is a matter of much doubt. The 3 vol. Novel is sold to the libraries for 15/-, & even that figure will have to be reduced, they say, owing to the competition of the swarm of new houses, which offer novels, good enough to meet the demand, for 7 & 8 shillings. S & E assure me that they have sold only 450 copies of "Thyrza." On the first edition of my books, I believe they make little or nothing. Remember that, if I received a royalty, 20% on the sale price would be very good; & 20% of 15/- is 3/-, & therefore in order that I might receive £150, no less than 1,000 copies would have to be sold (Gissing, *Collected Letters*, IV, 258-60).

In fact, *Thyrza* would indeed have lost over £59 on the three-volume edition had Gissing been paid £150, but at the £50 he was paid, Smith, Elder made over £41 on the edition and over £82 on the title. The 20% royalty Gissing speculated on was far beyond what he could actually expect: Smith, Elder had offered him £50 and a 10% royalty on sales beyond 500 (Nesta 2004). Gissing did not quite understand royalty agreements or that the advance would be against all the editions of the book, not just the library edition. He is also wrong in assuming that publishers made their profits

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<sup>58</sup> I do not have figures for *Born in Exile* but according to Coustillas' *Bibliography*, 520 copies were printed (as 480), 100 remaindered, and 46 sent as review or author's copies, leaving 374 sold, at best returning £280. If printing costs were the average £200 and copyright £150, A.C. Black would have incurred a £70 loss.

based on a ‘steady sale for some years’ – most of the profit was returned in the first two or three years of each edition’s appearance. Gissing was paid £150 for *The Nether World* and although Smith, Elder lost £39 over the three-year life of the three-volume edition, they made almost £133 on the title, most of it coming in the first two years of the six-shilling edition (£63) and in the first three years of the cheap edition (£42), with sales averaging about £6 in the 11 years following. *New Grub Street* had a similar profile with Smith, Elder losing money on the first edition in 1891 but making almost £104 over the life of the title to 1903, most of it (£112 13s 3d in net sales profit) coming from the cheap edition, which returned £52 in its first year and averaged £17 a year in sales. And, of course, Gissing was wrong about the deep discounts that would be offered to the circulating libraries.

Mudie’s Select Library ran into financial difficulties in 1861. Owing to his extensive book purchasing and the expense of building his flagship library (opened in 1860) on Oxford Street, Mudie suffered losses that year amounting to £66,000 (Finkelstein 1993, 24). His largest creditors, Smith, Elder; John Murray; Hurst & Blackett; Longmans; and Blackwood joined together to secretly extend credit to Mudie and help him get his accounts into order. To that end, in 1864 Mudie’s became a Limited Liability Company, selling £50,000 in shares to bring in additional capital. Finkelstein’s account of the episode is relevant here because he presents sales figures for Blackwood and Smith, Elder. In contrasting Blackwood with Smith, Elder; Bentley; and Murray, Blackwood issued few new works and mostly printed editions of 1,500 copies while Smith Elder, in the period between 1858 and 1865 printed 65 books of which only six were in editions over 1,500 copies. Mudie’s purchases of titles from them were similar, running between 30% to 50% or 60% and up to 70% for titles from Bentley’s. Purchases of Gissing’s titles by Mudie fell within this pattern. More importantly, Finkelstein’s list (see Appendix, Table 4) shows a pattern of overall sales as a percentage



of print runs that can be used to estimate if the three-volume novel was the guaranteed success that it was assumed to be.

Based on the Smith, Elder 1858-1865 sales figures in Finkelstein's essay on Mudie's financial salvation by the major publishers in 1863, three volume sales percentages were actually lower than those for one- and two-volume first editions (Finkelstein 1993). One-volume novels sold 70% of their printing, two-volume novels sold 68% and three-volume novels only 62% and this despite the supposed reluctance of the libraries to carry one-volume novels. Although these figures are 15 to 18 years earlier than the period we are examining, they seem to have held up as sales figures as seven of Gissing's three-volume novels averaged 61%, with the publishers losing money on three of those seven. Smith did not lose much on the three-volume sales and risked losing a small amount on 6s sales as well, *Demos* and *Thyrza* both losing over £25 each on those editions.

In *The Common Writer*, Nigel Cross makes the assumption that a £100 profit was possible on a 500 copy sale, even with a £100 copyright. If printing and binding cost £125 and advertising £20, and only 40 copies were sent for copyright deposit and review, £100 could be realized on a sale of 460 copies, and as he notes, even £10 profits over a long list of books could amount to substantial sums (Cross, 207). Griest subtitles her chapter on publishers' profits 'The Guaranteed Market' (58) and, using Trollope's estimations of the cost of producing an edition of 600 copies of a novel at £200, and with sales of 550 copies to the libraries at 15s (actually 14s 6d) bringing in £412, the author and publisher would share £212. The cost of producing Gissing's Smith, Elder titles averaged £202, so Trollope's figure could serve as a reasonable estimate.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> It could be less: an estimate found in the Bentley ledgers at the British Library shows £125 for an edition of 500 copies (see Appendix, Table 6). Bentley's edition of 1000 copies of *The Emancipated* cost £155 3s 7d for printing, paper, and binding and another £129 9s 10d for advertising, about £60 more than Smith, Elder normally spent on advertising Gissing, and the reason Bentley lost money on the title.

However, if the average sale of a three-volume novel was not 92% as Trollope calculated but 62%, as in Finkelstein's study, then it would be more likely that 372 copies would be sold and not, as above, the entire edition less review copies. At 15s per copy the publisher would net £279, leaving them £79 after deducting production costs. If the publisher paid the usual £50 for a copyright, he made £29 thus providing a 'guaranteed' profit, although it would in actuality be closer to £25 once discounts and overheads were accounted for. As the copyright fee went up, profitability declined, even if the novel sold out its printing. Using Finkelstein's list, and assuming the £200 cost of production and advertising would only rise to £250 on a printing of 1,000 or more copies (printing an additional 250 copies of *New Grub Street* added £25 to the cost), a profit begins to look less certain. With a £100 copyright, eleven of the titles on Finkelstein's list lose money. At £150, fully 15 of the 24 lose money. But that list also includes George Eliot's *Romola*, which sold 1,714 of its 2,288 copies and should have returned over £1,000 to Smith, Elder. Instead, it lost them £6,000, as Smith, Elder paid George Eliot £7,000 for the limited copyright. They did go on to profit from it, but on the cheap editions, and not from the three-volume edition. Finkelstein's list of three-volume novels includes five by Holme Lee (1828-1900), who was much favoured by Mudie and his patrons, and Elizabeth Gaskell. These were novelists who earned at the top end of the scale, certainly receiving at least £150 for their copyright. So, for minor novelists, such as Algernon Gissing, a publisher could usually make a profit on three-volume sales, even if there was no market beyond the circulating libraries, so long as the copyright could be obtained cheaply. For Algernon there was no external market until *The Scholar of Bygate*, printed first in three-volumes, in 1897, one of the last four three-volume novels to be published, appeared in a second edition. Algernon had sold his second book, *Both of This Parish*, to Hurst for £25 and got £16 for his first novel, prompting Gissing to comment in 1889 that 'I regard it as a grave misfortune to him

and to myself that he is obliged to pursue this career' (Gissing, *Collected Letters*, IV, 67-68).

For more popular novelists, two-thirds of their books would return a profit to the publisher if the copyright were kept at £100. At the watershed price of £150 however, the loss covers almost half of Finkelstein's list. This is why Smith, Elder and, when Gissing left them, other publishers, refused to pay more than £150 for the copyright of his next novel, *Born in Exile*. For anything above £150 a loss was more a certainty than a profit. For Finkelstein's list the overall profitability for all the titles drops dramatically, from £3,400 to £700.

Publishers may have seen the three-volume novel as a way to recover the copyright payment, but still, it made no economic sense to compose both three-volume and one-volume editions, a process that added £80 to £100 in composition costs to the overall expense of the title, along with the substantial expenses of advertising two editions. The three-volume novel may have made economic sense in the early years of the nineteenth century, when the reading public was small. After the Education Act of 1870, there was a literate public far larger than the number of families who could afford a library subscription.

There was also a myth that English readers borrowed rather than bought novels.<sup>60</sup> The English public did buy novels, and bought them by the thousands, but only when they appeared at affordable prices. People subscribed to circulating libraries

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<sup>60</sup> Griest quotes George Henry Lewes telling Blackwell that a wealthy friend went to Mudie's to obtain a copy of *Romola*, leaving disappointed when she found it was out, despite the fact that it was then available in a cheap edition, 'Buying books was not in her habit' (Griest, 82). For some people fiction may have been something that was only obtained from the libraries, but obviously there was a market for books at reasonable prices or there would have been no reprints. Gladstone wrote that in England ' "new publications" issue from the press, for the most part, at prices fabulously high, so that the class of real purchasers has been extirpated, leaving behind as buyers only a few individuals who might almost be counted on the fingers, while the effective circulation depends upon middle-men through the engine of circulating libraries'. (W.E. Gladstone. *On Books and the Housing of Them*. New York: M.F. Mansfield, 1898. Online at <http://www.rtpnet.org/robroy/gladstone/onbooks.html> . 27 Sept. 2005). Gladstone also remarked in a Parliamentary debate in 1852 that except for only the wealthiest of his friends, new books were borrowed.

to obtain new books because they had no choice, and not necessarily because they preferred borrowing. There was no mass market for the expensive three-volume novel, and as the literate middle-class grew, publishers began rushing their novels into cheap editions. Simon Eliot has demonstrated that the period before the cheap reprint appeared became increasingly shorter toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and that is apparent in Gissing's novels as well (Eliot, *Three-Decker*). Smith, Elder waited eight months before issuing *Demos* in a cheap edition in 1886, nine months before issuing *A Life's Morning* in 1888, but by 1889 they waited only seven months before reissuing *The Nether World* and in 1891 only five months before reissuing *New Grub Street*, and this despite their abortive 'second edition' of the three-volume edition.

In the early years of the century, when fewer than 500 novels were published annually and a mass audience had not yet developed, the three-volume novel may have made sense, to both libraries and publishers. The number of novels published annually more than doubled between 1884 and 1888 (408 titles vs. 929), fell back slightly in 1890, but totalled over 1,300 in 1894 (*Publisher's Circular*, see Appendix, Table 5). As long as three-volume novels predominated, the costs of stocking fiction and its short life-span were simply becoming too much for the circulating libraries to bear. By the mid-nineties, the libraries withdrew from the market and the three-volume novel was dead. Gettmann cites correspondence between Bentley and Mudie (Gettmann 258-262) in which Mudie complains about the huge and increasing volume of dead best-sellers in their stores. Mudie was so badly hurt by *Endymion* and lost so much on the book that he cut his subsequent orders for Bentley's books and asked him to hold back on publishing more for six months. Mudie was already feeling the pressure in 1884, writing to Bentley that 'not one in twelve of the 3 vol novels pays its way.' (Gettmann, *Victorian* 259). Mudie's son Arthur felt the three-volume novel 'serves no useful purpose whatever in our business and I shall be heartily glad and much relieved if the gods (i.e. the publishers)

will give us the one volume novel from the first. In every possible way it suits us better and I very long ago ventured to think it would benefit English fiction' (op cit 259).

Short-lived fiction was killing the libraries and draining their resources away from more stable and long-lived non-fiction. Even when Mudie and Smith gave their ultimatum, Bentley resisted at first but by 1895 he published only two three-volume novels, and those at reduced prices.

John Sutherland defended the three-volume format as an instrument that supported the development of the English novel and he, Griest, and others make the assumption that the three-volume novel and the circulating libraries provided a risk-free system for publishers to bring new novelists to public attention. Gissing himself believed in the myth that the circulating libraries supported novelists. In *New Grub Street*, Reardon says:

And here comes in the benefit of the libraries; from the commercial point of view the libraries are indispensable. Do you suppose the public would support the present number of novelists if each book had to be purchased? A sudden change to that system would throw three-fourths of the novelists out of work (*New Grub Street* 215).

The facts in Gissing's case and in the careers of other novelists do not bear this out. Just as today, publishers were loathe to take chances on new novelists and the end of the three-volume novel and decline of the circulating libraries had little if any effect on authorship. At the height of the dominance of the three-volume novel and the circulating libraries, first novels were difficult to sell to any but commission publishers. Several publishers refused to publish Gissing's *Workers in the Dawn*: Smith, Elder, Sampson & Low, and Keagan Paul among them. Gissing was forced to pay for its publication himself. Although it was published in three volumes, and priced at a bargain 21s, it was not the sort of novel that would attract Mudie's clients and the circulating libraries did not purchase it in quantity, although Mudie's did carry it, and featured it in

their list, giving Gissing some encouragement.<sup>61</sup> Like Gissing, Thomas Hardy also had to pay to have his first novel published, paying £75 to Tinsley to publish *Desperate Remedies* (3 vols, Tinsley Brothers, 1871). Hardy lost £15 on the outcome, despite the novel selling 370 copies. It also appeared in Mudie's Surplus catalogue three months later, at 2s 6d. (Griest 60). This was the second novel Hardy wrote, the first, *The Poor Man and the Lady* (1867) was refused by the publishers and Hardy destroyed the manuscript.

One of the most common complaints by readers about circulating libraries in the *Times* was that anyone who could pay would be published and taken by the circulating libraries. The numerous guides for young authors recommend paying as the surest, if not the only way for an unknown to get published. Without a subsidy from the author, either in payment or entering into half-profit or other contracts that would minimize a publisher's risk, or without a strong recommendation from the publisher's reader, unknown authors were not guaranteed a place on Mudie's shelves.

But even being in print and being in Mudie's was still no guarantee that publishers would take a novelist's second book, in part because the circulating libraries probably discouraged more new fiction than they encouraged, witness Gissing's *Mrs. Grundy's Enemies*, rejected by Smith, Elder. 'It exhibits a great deal of dramatic power and is certainly not wanting in vigour, but in our judgement it is too painful to please the ordinary novel reader and treats of scenes that can never attract the subscribers to Mr. Mudie's Library.' Gissing adds 'Of course I could have told them that.' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 99). Chatto & Windus also turned it down. Remington offered to take

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<sup>61</sup> Of *Workers in the Dawn*, he wrote 'Certainly my book is finding some readers, for Mudie puts it in his selected list for the new year'. (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 1). Gissing notes that it was also in Mudie's May catalogue (41). For *Thryza*, 'The demand for my books is steadily increasing, & will do. Mudie, I hear, took 60 copies of 'Thryza' to begin with, & has sent for another 25 since. Over against this put the fact that he has just taken 2000 of Rider Haggard's new book [*Allan Quartermain*, issued in one volume]. Yes, but mine will be read when Haggard's is waste paper' (Gissing, *Collected Letters*, III, 134-135). Mudie's took 175 in total of Gissing's book and remaindered the Haggard books soon after their publication.

it on half-profits, if Gissing paid £75 towards its production. Bentley finally offered £50, but, fearing Mudie, withdrew it even after extensive revision and after the first two volumes had been printed. Chapman and Hall did take his controversial *The Unclassed* (1884), at George Meredith's urging, Chapman telling Gissing that Mudie 'ought to take 100 copies' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 197). Despite its prostitute heroine being too shocking a concept even for Frederic Harrison and others of Gissing's friends, Mudie's did take some copies but Gissing records in his diary for 30 June 1888 that he had received a letter from a Miss Carter of Ripon in Yorkshire saying that although people are asking for *The Unclassed* at her circulating library it was not allowed to be circulated. *The Unclassed* appears in Mudie's 1888 catalogue, along with *Workers in the Dawn*, *Thyrza*, *Demos*, and *Isabel Clarendon*. Chapman printed only 400 copies of *The Unclassed* (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 11) and a one-volume edition did not appear until Lawrence and Bullen published a much revised and reduced edition in 1895.

Rather than being an almost risk-free way of publishing, there was no economic justification for the three-volume novel beyond the fee structure of the circulating libraries. The claim that its demise would mean the end of publisher acceptance of unknown authors also has no substantiation. It is not uncommon in publishing for publishers and booksellers to defend a practice that makes no logical sense, and claim to do it because they are the champions of unknown authors. Publishing is known to be a conservative industry and authors can be as conservative as their publishers. In 1936, forty-two years after the end of the three-decker, Orwell predicted that the appearance of cheap 6d Penguin Books would result in a 'flood of cheap reprints which will cripple the lending libraries (the novelist's foster-mother) and check the output of new novels' (Schmoller, 300). Writing in 1938, Stanley Unwin thought the idea of reviving the 6d reprint would damage bookselling and sell only the limited number of titles that had a mass demand (Schmoller, 300-301).

If it were true that the demise of the three-decker would see publishers less willing to take risks, then the numbers of novels published after 1894 should have declined. The opposite is the case. The statistics of 'Novels, Tales, and Other Fiction' published in the annual 'Analytical Table of Books' in the *Publishers' Circular* (Appendix, Table 5) from the ten years prior to 1894 and the ten years after, shows that there is a doubling of the numbers of new books titles published after 1894, from an average of 821 new novels published between 1884 and 1893 to an average of 1,679 published annually from between 1894 and 1904. If the three-volume novel and the circulating libraries were the mainstay of fiction, particularly new fiction, then there should be a decline in new novels after 1894 and an increase of new editions and reprints. The 'Analytical Table of Books' again shows just the opposite. In 1893 fewer than a thousand new fiction titles were published in England. In 1894 the number grew to 1,315 and continued to climb each year following, going up to a high of 1,960 in 1897. New editions varied from year to year, depending on the number of titles published and other variables. Of the fiction titles from 1884 to 1894 new editions of older titles comprised between 71% to 26% of the total output and accounted for a lower ratio in years after, from 22% in 1895 to 47% in 1904, contradicting the premise that the demise of the three-volume novel forced publishers to turn down new fiction in favour of proven titles.

In 1893 the *Publishers' Circular* reviewed the effect of the American copyright act and found that it seemed to have had little impact, but tellingly, that the preference of Americans for single-volume works might force British novelists to write novels in two forms, 'a prospect that may give rise to complications' (1 July: 5). In fact, British novelists were already faced with the same situation at home when they either had to revise their novels for their eventual one-volume edition or let their publishers do it for them.



Sutherland (*Economics* 28) provides figures for 500-copy editions of two anonymous novels published by Bentley (*The Ruling Passion* and *The Last of the Cavaliers*) in which the author was paid £50 for the first title and half-profits for the second. For the first title there was a £90 loss and in the second Bentley received £4 4s as his profit. Sutherland interprets the figures as meaning that if the author's copyright could be purchased for £50 the publisher would break even on sales of 200 copies. This, he contends, 'kept open the long expensive lines which brought a constant supply of fiction to the public' and 'encouraged publishers to take chances' on unknowns (28). Sutherland quotes the trade adage that 'of five books, three lose money, one covers costs, and the fifth makes a profit,' and gives the example of Mrs Henry Wood's *East Lynne*, brought out in 750 copies on half-profits in 1861 and going on to earn a fortune for Bentley and Wood. Because of the 750-copy printing Sutherland assumes that Bentley felt it to be little better than the anonymous novels cited earlier. Although Bentley did commonly print 1,000 copies of a novel (Gettmann, *Victorian* 139), the 750 printing was not necessarily a lack of faith in the novel itself. Bentley and Mrs Wood made over £600 each on the three-volume edition, but Bentley took the novel after other publishers had turned it down (it was famously rejected by Meredith at Chapman and Hall), just as George Smith took a chance on Charlotte Brontë after rejecting her earlier novel, but giving her encouragement to submit another. If the profit was guaranteed, why would publishers have readers, like Meredith and Geraldine Jewsbury, who were selective, taking only novels they believed would sell or at least be an investment for the future of the publishing house? The three-volume novel and its supposed economics did not mean that publishers accepted any novel, not even novels of merit, unless the author was willing to accept all or a substantial part of the costs and risks. It still required that a talented author would be lucky enough to find a discerning publisher, something that was as true before 1894 as after. Sutherland attributes part of

the Golden Age of the English novel to a 'high-price equilibrium' that favoured the production of fiction, no matter how bad, thereby allowing the best to have a chance to come forward. Looking at America, where books were inexpensive and there was a large reading audience that supported publishing houses far larger than in London, the novels published were overwhelmingly British: in 1856 the Americans published only two new American novels and twenty-four British in one randomly selected month. This is probably less the fact of high-priced novels encouraging British fiction but of American piracy of British editions suppressing the market for American novelists, and the cultural differences between a young country just developing its literature and a mature country enjoying an expansion of its population, wealth, and leisure. Michael Anesko, in portraying the differences between American and British markets for new books, also assumes, as does Henry James, that English first editions had more readers than did American. But *Daisy Miller*, pirated in America, and appearing in serial form there, still had sales in cheap editions of 20,000 'within weeks', while *Daisy Miller* in England, appearing in 1879 in a two-volume edition, as well as a serial, sold only 285 copies, despite going into two 250-copy editions (Anesko, 43 and note 71, 214). Popular as this novel was, it would still be difficult to assume *Daisy Miller's* British circulating library readership matched its American sales.

Two other common assumptions about the three-volume novel are illustrated by comments by Annabel Jones in her essay on the publishing history of Disraeli's *Endymion*.<sup>62</sup> One is a misunderstanding that the three-volumes were preferred because one set could circulate simultaneously to three individuals: 'Thus, with three-decker novels Mudie could circulate the three different parts of one title to three separate subscribers and, with the discounts thus obtained, double or triple his profit on a single-

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<sup>62</sup> Annabel Jones, 'Disraeli's *Endymion*', *Essays in the History of Publishing in Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the House of Longman 1724-1974*, (London: Longman, 1974) 141-86.

decker. Since Mudie's whole method of distribution and success was based on the three-decker form, he was reluctant to stock or advertise a one-or two-volume edition' (Jones 167).<sup>63</sup> As we have seen earlier, this does not seem to be the case, nor would it make sense for subscribers to willingly start a new novel with a later volume. It also ignores the fact that most of Mudie's stock was in one or two-volume format, the three-volume format primarily used for current fiction, not for non-fiction, the bulk of Mudie's stock. Nor was the three-volume format the only form for fiction. Gettmann (231) uses figures from the Sadleir Collection to demonstrate that while more three-volume novels were published than one, two, or four volume novels, a significant number of those were published as well: in the 1870s 72 one-volume and 38 two-volume novels were published against 167 three-volume novels. In the 1880s there were 131 one-volume and 52 two-volume novels published against 165 published in three-volume format.

There was also an assumption made by Jones, and by contemporary writers as well, that the format provided 'value for money'. Jones cites a quote from Amy Cruse's *The Victorians and Their Books* (334) about a publisher who said 'to be able for twenty-one shillings to have for a quarter of a year ten volumes of excellent literature for one's own exclusive use seems to me a real privilege and a capital return for one's money.' The 'publisher' is actually Fanny Kemble, who described taking a three-month subscription for her daughter in 1877. In her description she mentions that she sent her daughter two titles, Charles Kingsley's *Life and Letters*, which was published in two volumes and the single volume of Captain Burnaby's *Ride Across Asia Minor*. What Kemble is describing is not the value of the standard guinea payment for the year but the six-month, four-volumes-at-a time payment that was normally 2 guineas.

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<sup>63</sup> This was also an assumption that was contemporary with the age of the three-volume novel, as a letter from 'Another Novelist' also noted that Mudie could keep three patrons satisfied with one novel (Another Novelist, 'The Three-Volume Novel', *Times*, 7 January 1886: 12).

The end of the three-volume novel came in 1894 when Mudie and W.H. Smith wrote a joint letter to the publishers demanding a reduction in price and a one-year wait before a single volume reprint. The publishers refused to comply, and Mudie refused to take any more three-volume novels. In 1895, M.E. Braddon complained in a letter to *The Times* (23 September) that those who looked for her novel *Sons of Fire* (3 vols. Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1895) at Mudie's were given a circular that said "Sons of Fire": The Publishers having decided to publish this book in three volumes, at a prohibitive price, the directors are compelled to wait for the production of the one-volume edition, which (judging from past experience) will be in a very few weeks'. Miss Braddon was incensed that the sum her publishers had been charging for the past 33 years was now 'prohibitive' and wanted to inform her readers that 'no cheap edition of any novel of mine has appeared within less than six months...while of late years the interval has been eight months'. *Sons of Fire* appeared in a cheap edition 11 months later. In 1897 the last three-volume novels were published, including Algernon's. The reasons for Mudie and W.H. Smith refusing to carry the three-volume novel may be found in their demand to the publishers: it was too expensive, ultimately even for them, and the quick re-issue of affordable one-volume imprints hurt both their lending and their sales of used novels. Mudie had protested to Bentley about it in 1884. In 1886, a letter to the *Times* quoted a library owner who said 'We should be glad to see the one-volume system established. We are compelled to take a large number of copies of three-volume novels by popular authors, and as soon as the first curiosity is over the publisher brings out a cheap edition, and we are burdened with three-volume copies which we have to sell as remainders'.<sup>64</sup>

Space was yet another problem for the circulating libraries: Mudie was stuck with 9000 volumes of *Endymion*, for example (Griest 159). Thousands of other volumes

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<sup>64</sup> Not a Novelist, 'The Three-Volume Novel', *Times*, 11 January 1886: 4.

filled the ‘catacombs’ under Mudie’s Oxford Street shop. When Preston visited them in 1894 he reported seeing 3,500 copies of a novel that Mudie had purchased for 22s 6d each and ‘now can not sell at a half-crown’ (Preston, 24). It may well have been the space problem that was most important, as the sheer size of the three-decker ate up display space, storage space, and made it more expensive to ship to patrons or distribute to other locations. The circulating libraries may also have been facing competition from the new public libraries but primarily what the circulating libraries were facing was a large increase in the numbers of novels being published. Novels accounted for one-third of their total stock by title and over 40% by volume count (Griest 38). The circulating libraries had to carry new novels to maintain the interests and subscriptions of their subscribers, and carry a sufficient quantity of each title to satisfy demand. The publisher Samuel Tinsley, writing in the *Times* as early as 1871, noted subscribers complaints that popular novels were never in sufficient stock and suggested that the cheap novel would better serve readers and authors than the three-volume (*Times* 4 December 1871: 4). It was a dinosaur of a past age, and with its passing, the Leviathan, as Mudie’s was known, would pass away as well.

For Gissing and for other authors, the end of the format meant the end of the constraint to write to the three-volume format. In 1901 Gissing replied to a French critic who complained about the lengthy dialogues retarding the action in *New Grub Street* and *Born in Exile* that: ‘Of course you are right about the superfluities to be found in both of them. The fault is partly due to their having been written when English fiction was subjected to the three volume system; but also in a measure to the haste in which all my early work was done. As the Oxford undergraduate said about his essay – I had no time to make the things shorter. However, in the case of *New Grub Street*, this defect is remedied in the French translation; almost a third of the novel has been cut

out. If ever I get the opportunity, I shall give all my books a vigorous revision, and cut them down' (Gettmann, Victorian 253).

We need to re-evaluate some of the assumptions about the economics of the three-volume novel. First, it was not always profitable as editions would not always sell enough copies to cover the author's payment. Secondly, the three-volume novel was not as receptive to new novelists as supposed. Had it been, Gissing and others, including Hardy would not have had to pay to have their first novels published. In fact, the end of the three-volume novel was followed by an increase in the number of new novels being published and a decrease in the number of reissues of older titles. Thirdly, the libraries made their profit on subscriptions, not on circulation. They preferred three-volume novels because that format forced subscribers to take the two guinea subscription, as most seem to have done. And finally, the number of library subscribers was small while the number of readers after 1870 was large and growing. The public demanded affordable novels and the publishers met that demand by issuing cheap editions shortly after the three-volume edition appeared and by doubling the number of novels they published. The expense of stocking an increasing number of novels while their number of subscribers declined finally forced the circulating libraries to kill the creature that had supported them for decades. The triple-headed monster finally died of its own weight.

## Chapter 6: The Schoolmaster's Vision: Serial and Periodical Publications

The expansion of the reading public after the 1870 Education Act boosted the market for newspapers, magazines, and other serials, a market that was larger than the market for books. Serial publications provided affordable entertainment to readers in terms of both money and time, and offered authors a chance to increase or even double their income from a single novel, and expose themselves to a wider market. The book and periodical markets were more closely related during the late-nineteenth century than they were earlier or would be later. The periodical market was secondary to Gissing but still important in that he wrote for it and made money from it, serialized his novels in it, and depended on it for reviews and in keeping his name before the public.

Gissing's own career as a writer began with short stories written and published during his self-exile in America in 1877. While there, he published 23 known pieces, mostly during his brief stay in Chicago. One was published in *Appleton's Journal*, and the remaining stories were published in newspapers: the *Chicago Post*, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, *Chicago Evening Journal* and other Chicago papers, all between March and August of 1877. Some were unsigned and some written under the pseudonym G.R. Gresham. Gissing was paid \$18 (£3 12s) for each of the stories he wrote for the *Chicago Tribune* and \$45 (£9) for the *Appleton's Journal* story (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 457-463). His earnings were not enough to live on in America, but they were an encouragement for a 19-year old aspiring writer. Why Gissing left Waltham, Massachusetts and his \$800 a year position teaching German, French and English to go to Chicago is unknown. The position in Waltham seems to have been as a temporary replacement and perhaps, like Mr Donne in Gissing's short story 'A Schoolmaster's Vision', he had his own vision of his more romantic future. Like Whelpdale in *New Grub Street*, he hoped to find employment on a newspaper as a journalist (*New Grub Street* 416-421). Gissing stayed in Chicago for only

four months, going on to Troy, New York hoping to find employment on a newspaper that had reprinted 'The Sins of the Fathers', his first published story (*Chicago Tribune*, 10 March 1877: 11). The job was not forthcoming and Gissing nearly starved before finding itinerant employment that took him to Boston, whence he returned to England (Gissing, *Collected Letters* I, 55, 58; Korg, *George Gissing* 15-19). One of his Chicago stories, 'The Artist's Child', was revised and became his first British publication, appearing in *Tinsley's Magazine* XXII, January 1878 (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 461). At that time, Gissing wrote to Algernon that he had 'begun in earnest at the Museum to write for the Magazines', thinking that obstinate determination would 'ensure ultimate success' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* I, 80). It is hard to imagine Gissing having the voice or aptitude for magazine writing and he must have given up the idea and concentrated on his first novel (never published and title unrecorded) instead, although he had begun a second work that he would 'try a magazine with' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* I, 97-98).

Although Gissing's short stories feature some of his best work, he preferred to write novels and, except for a two-year period between 1895 and 1896, wrote between two and seven short stories a year. Novels brought in more money and more status. They could also be serialized before publication in volume form, allowing Gissing to sometimes double his income from a single work as the serialization often paid as much as the sale of the volume. Four of Gissing's novels were serialized, starting with *Demos* (for which he was not paid) and ending with *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. Gissing's travelogue, *By the Ionian Sea*, also began as a serial in the *Fortnightly Review*.

Serialization of novels in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century replaced the publication in parts that Dickens had made so successful. Unlike part-publication, serialization distributed novels together with other reading matter, either in a weekly newspaper or in a literary journal. By 1873, there were over 1,100 periodicals published in Great Britain outside London (Altick, *English* 356) and by 1901, there were 8,914 periodicals published in the



United Kingdom as a whole (Eliot, *Cambridge Companion* 48). Some of the literary magazines were owned by publishing houses and showcased their authors: the *Cornhill* for Smith, Elder; *Macmillan's* by the publishing house of the same name; Bentley's *Temple Bar*. The literary magazines had small circulations, the influential *Fortnightly Review*, for example, only had a circulation of 2,500 in 1872. Most had circulations under 15,000. Although the *Cornhill* sold 120,000 copies on its first appearance in 1860, by 1882, its circulation had dropped to 12,000 as it competed both with literary and popular magazines (Altick, *English* 359, 395). Serialization was popular with some novelists. Trollope initially published 25 of his 34 novels in the *Cornhill*, *Fortnightly Review*, *Blackwood's* and other magazines. Serialization could offer an author feed-back from his audience if a novel was published as it was being written. Trollope recounts in his autobiography that he overheard two clergymen in the Athenaeum Club discussing his current serial, the *Last Chronicle of Barset*. They complained how tired they were of Mrs Proudie so Trollope went home and killed her (Trollope 275).<sup>65</sup>

The periodicals enjoyed wide distribution across Britain and Europe, providing opportunities for translations to appear abroad. Authors who wanted the maximum exposure and who could command high fees were able to take advantage of the syndication of their novels in the provincial papers, the placement made easier by the rise of firms of syndicators like Tillotsons and later by A.P. Watt and other literary agents. Mrs Braddon, Walter Besant, Hall Caine, and others found that they could reach an audience of hundreds of thousands of readers through periodicals and syndication. Graham Law's study shows that Braddon's *Taken at the Flood* may have had a circulation of 250,000 in 1873 via periodical serialization and Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*

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<sup>65</sup> The story recounted in the *Autobiography* and referred to from another source in Cruse's work (280-281) may be just an invention on Trollope's part as this was the 'last' Chronicle. See Anthony Arthur, 'The Death of Mrs. Proudie: "Frivolous Slaughter" Or Calculated Dispatch?' *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 26, no. 4 (1972): 477-84.

more than 350,000, with possible circulations reaching totals of a half-million by the end of the 1880s (Law 2000, 131).

The effect that serialization had on the form and composition of a novel is debatable. Hughes and Lund (1991) review the criticism directed at the Victorian serial, such as its cliff-hanging part endings, its fragmentation, padding, the possible compromise of an author's control of a novel in response to reader's comments, and suggest that those criticisms come from a later period in which Victorian literature had little respect (Hughes and Lund 13). Gissing did specifically write one novel, 'Clement', for serialization and when Bentley rejected it for *Temple Bar* as a serial but offered to publish it in volume form, Gissing withdrew it, writing in his diary for 7 June 1888:

Let me note here the history of "Clement". I wrote it from February to May, immediately after finishing "Thyrza". Then I took it to Bentley and offered it for "Temple Bar". For that purpose he declined to use it, but was willing to publish it in vols. I declined – thinking it unworthy to succeed "Thyrza" – and threw it aside, wrapped as it came from Bentley (Gissing, *London* 31).

Despite his objection to having 'Clement' published in another format, Gissing also wrote *Eve's Ransom* and the *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* for serialization and did not object to their later publication in volume form. Nor did he object to *Demos* being serialized by Smith, Elder without his consent, even though it was not written with that intention, nor was *A Life's Morning*, written as a three-volume novel but serialized in *The Cornhill*. He also approved of Pinker's attempts to serialize *Our Friend the Charlatan*, provided it paid at least £150 and would not be long delayed (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 87).

Gissing was certainly aware of form and structure in his composition but his comment that 'Clement' was 'unworthy to succeed Thyrza' as a novel, may have implied his own opinion of serials being generally less worthy than volume publication. Indeed, in 1888 he termed the practice 'a vile method' of publication (Gissing, *Collected Letters*

III, 193). Gissing's only humorous novel (he called it a '*comedy* of the lower middle class'), *The Town Traveller*, was conceived as a serial, Gissing casting around for 'a story that would serialize' on 28 December 1896, seven days after he had sold *The Whirlpool* to Bullen (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VI, 304; *Diary* 430). He finished *The Town Traveller* in the summer of 1897 and in his correspondence with Colles, he expressly refers to serializing ('I shall put it in your hands for that purpose specially'), with later appearance in volume form (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VI, 305, 306). Three days later he wrote to Algernon, 'I am getting through a short book which I think Colles will serialize for me. Cash! Cash!' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VI, 305). Unfortunately, by the end of 1897, Colles had not been successful in placing *The Town Traveller* as a serial with Longman or Putnam and Gissing gave up hope of being attractive to the serial market (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 21-22). On 28 January 1898, Gissing wrote to Colles from Italy with a firm 'No' regarding Methuen's offer to publish *The Town Traveller* in volume form as he wrote it 'expressly for serial use' and will either withdraw it or 'have a considerably more important advance' than Methuen's offer (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 49). Gissing acceded when Colles was able to secure £250 from Methuen for English rights and £100 from Frederick A. Stokes in America.

Gissing despised the popular market that he saw catering to the 'quarter-educated' people 'incapable of sustained attention' who only wanted 'something to occupy them in trains and on 'buses and trams' (*New Grub Street* 492), who read only Sunday newspapers and 'bits of description'. He only syndicated two short items, 'Christmas on the Capitol' for Tillotsons and a piece on Dickens' 'homes and haunts' for the Northern Newspaper Syndicate, a major competitor to Tillotsons (Law 2000, 99-100). On 21 October 1889 Gissing wrote to Bertz that he had just corrected the proofs for 'Christmas on the Capitol' for Tillotsons. 'For that, I receive £10; it is only the ordinary magazine rate of payment. Of course I should never dream of writing a

story for a newspaper syndicate; the kind of stuff they publish, & the way they advertise it, is too ignoble' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 130). At the end of 1900 Gissing received a request from the Northern Newspaper Syndicate to write 2500 words for £6 6s on Dickens' 'homes and haunts' (Gissing, *London* 534). The article was published on 16 August 1902 in the *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 455). Gissing's article, along with those others written by Patrick Geddes, Andrew Lang, and others, were later published in a collected edition in 1906 as *Homes and Haunts of Famous Authors*, by Wells, Gardner, Darton & Co. The Northern Newspaper Syndicate syndicated *Will Warburton* in England and Australia but only after Gissing's death (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VI, 295, note 2).

*Demos*, published in 1886, was serialized by Smith, Elder in the *Manchester Weekly Times* in 1889 (20 July 1889 to 1 Feb 1890), Smith, Elder receiving £25 in payment for it, a payment the firm did not share with Gissing. Gissing refers to the serialization in a letter to Bertz (14 December 1889), writing that he was told 'big advertisements of it were posted all over the walls of the town', something that he did 'not altogether rejoice at' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 167). *Demos* was not written for serialization and it was the normal practice to serialize a novel before its volume publication, rather than after. In this case it may have been requested by the *Manchester Weekly Times* because of Gissing's association with the region, an interest possibly stimulated by the 1888 publication in the *Cornhill* of *A Life's Morning* and its appearance in volume form at the end of that year. *A Life's Morning* was set in Wakefield, and the *Wakefield Free Press*, published an article on 10 March 1888 titled 'A Novelist's Picture of Wakefield' that cited passages from the March instalment of *A Life's Morning* that they took to refer to the town (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 191).

*A Life's Morning* had been written three years previously under the title 'Emily' and sold to Smith, Elder on 30 December 1885. The receipt was for £50 for the entire copyright, with the understanding that another £50 would be paid if the story were published in the *Cornhill Magazine*. The novel sat on Payn's desk for two years before being published in the *Cornhill* (January to December 1888). The final payment to Gissing was made on 30 December 1887 and it was published in three-volume format on 15 November 1888. The serialization was one more reason for the delay in its volume publication, as volume publication was almost always delayed until the completion or near-completion of the serial. Morley Roberts contends that Payn had Gissing rewrite the ending so that the heroine married rather than died, as Gissing originally intended, although there is no surviving record in Gissing's correspondence.<sup>66</sup> In a letter to his sister Ellen on 25 March 1888, as he was revising the proofs for the serial, Gissing wrote 'I begin to see that the story is by no means contemptible. It is the method of publication which is at fault, -- a vile method. Wait till you can judge the work as a whole; my artistic instincts have not failed me.' Still, as he was revising the proofs, he was also able to enjoy contacts from his readers, receiving comments on it as he was revising it in advance of volume publication. In a diary entry on 14 March, he mentions a request from Fanny le Breton, who wanted to translate *Demos* and who was reading the serialization of *A Life's Morning* in Paris, a fact that he mentions in a letter to Ellen on 14 March: 'It rejoices me that I have readers in *Paris*!' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* III, 191). On 26 March he notes a letter from a Miss E.F. Scott in Paris, praising *A Life's Morning* and on 6 April from a W.C. Sowerby, who knew Gissing's father, asking if Dunfield in *A Life's Morning* was Wakefield. He finished the proofs on Sunday, 10 June,

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<sup>66</sup> *Bibliography*, 62, referring to Roberts' fictionalized biography *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*, p. 91-92, where *A Life's Morning* becomes 'In the Morning', Smith, Elder becomes 'Miller & Co.', and Payn appears as John Glass. The story also appeared in Roberts' introduction to the 1927 edition of *A Life's Morning*.

entering into his diary: 'Corrected the last proof-sheets of "A Life's Morning". Thank heaven! A great trial to me, this re-reading of a weak production.'

On 15 January 1894, Gissing gave Shorter six short stories he had requested for the *English Illustrated Magazine* and agreed to write a 60,000 word serial for the *Illustrated London News*. It was to run for 13 weeks and Gissing would be paid £150 (Gissing, *London* 327). The serial, 'Eve's Ransom', was finished on 29 June 1894 and serialized from 5 January to 30 March 1895. Gissing wrote to Colles just before it began that he supposed it would 'help in getting off other serial work' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 266). The serial publication was to have begun in October 1894 but was delayed because of problems with the illustrations, originally given to Fred Barnard (1846-1896). Gissing did not like the sketches Barnard had done of his characters Dengate and Hilliard when he saw them in August (Gissing, *London* 343) and by September Shorter talked of postponing the book until January because of Barnard's alcoholism. When Gissing saw Barnard in November he found him drunk and barely able to talk (Gissing, *London* 354). Shorter finally hired Walter Paget (1863-1935), the brother of illustrators Henry and Sidney Paget and the model for some of Sidney's Sherlock Holmes illustrations, to complete them (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 189-190).

Methuen was interested in purchasing the volume rights but Gissing preferred to remain with Lawrence and Bullen, offering Methuen another novel if they wished (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 284). There was some further confusion, as Stedman saw an announcement that confused George Gissing with Algernon and made Stedman assume that *Eve's Ransom* was to be published by Hurst and Blackett (Gissing, *London* 365; *Collected Letters* V, 305-306). Lawrence and Bullen purchased the book rights to *Eve's Ransom* for 50 guineas in February 1895. The volume appeared on 8 April, prompting a complaint from Shorter that it appeared too soon after the serial ended. Gissing replied

that there was no understanding that the novel should be delayed, nor had Lawrence and Bullen, who were receiving advance proofs from Shorter, been aware of any difficulty. Shorter apologized shortly after and asked for more stories, but Gissing noted that his 'eyes had been opened to yet one more of the harassing points that have to be kept in view by one who writes for periodicals. Meaning perfectly well, I find myself held guilty of gross duplicity' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 315-16). Lawrence and Bullen sold the American rights to Appleton and because American copyright law required that it be printed in America, they published the English edition from the American plates, something that distressed Gissing, both before and after he saw the volume (Gissing, *London* 363; *Collected Letters* V, 317). Coustillas speculates that the Americans worked from the uncorrected proofs Shorter had sent to Lawrence and Bullen (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 318, note 1; Coustillas, *George Gissing* 190). The volume issue went through two editions in 1895 under the Lawrence and Bullen imprint, another edition under the A.H. Bullen imprint in 1901, the American edition, and a colonial edition of 1,500 from Bell, also in 1895. There were also Russian (1895), French (1898 and 1907), Danish (1900) and Dutch (1904) translations, as well as several editions after Gissing's death (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 191-198).

On 29 June 1899, after finishing some of his Dickens prefaces, he began writing *By the Ionian Sea*, sending nine chapters to Pinker on 11 July and finishing it on 9 August. Pinker had the manuscript typed and the corrections were returned to him before the end of August, with some delay caused by the loss of one of the typescripts in the mail. Pinker offered *By the Ionian Sea* to Blackwood, who turned it down, much to Gissing's disappointment (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 366, 378). On 22 Oct 1899, Gissing wrote to Bertz that Pinker was trying to serialize *By the Ionian Sea* but Gissing was 'Doubtful whether he will succeed, I fear.' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 389). It was not until 20 February 1900 that Gissing could record in his diary that Pinker had sold *By the Ionian*

*Sea* to the *Fortnightly Review* for 120 guineas (Gissing, *London* 523). This is an error as his Account of Books at the Lilly Library records two payments of £56 14s and £46 17s 8s, for a total of £103 11s 8d for the serial rights. As he elsewhere cites £120 for the payment, the amount in his Account of Books most likely reflects a payment of £120 rather than 120 guineas (£126), less Pinker's commission and typing fees (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 13, 28). *By the Ionian Sea* ran in the *Fortnightly Review* from May to October 1900 and Gissing received many comments on it as it appeared, including one from 'poor old Ouida', living in poverty in Italy, who marvelled at his ability to understand south Italian dialects, and one from Wells, telling how his copy of the *Fortnightly Review* went to his neighbour, then to Joseph Conrad, then to Henry Hick (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 70, 96). By September Gissing was expecting that the favourable reception of the serial would mean it would do well as a book (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 89). Gissing had hoped Pinker could get £200 for the volume rights (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 28) but he was only able to secure £130 from Chapman and Hall, also publishers of the *Fortnightly Review*, who were given publication rights in Great Britain, the Colonies, and the United States for seven years from the date of publication (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 79, note 1). They paid in two instalments, one in 1900 for £58 10s and another in 1901 for £65. Gissing accepted the offer at the end of May 1900, but at that time he assumed it was for only the English rights, telling Pinker in August that he felt £130 was a small sum for both England and America, but he would let it go (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 54, 79). The book publication was delayed until Chapman and Hall found a suitable illustrator, Leo de Littrow, in January 1901, the volume finally appearing in June 1901 (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 128). Chapman and Hall were not able to place American (Scribner's, 1905) or Colonial (T. Fisher Unwin, 1905) editions until after Gissing's death.



Gissing's final serialization was 'An Author at Grass: Extracts from the Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft. Edited by George Gissing', appearing in the *Fortnightly Review* from 1 May 1902 to February 1903 and published in book form as *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* in late January 1903. Although Gissing described it as 'a little book (some 45,000 words) which has been in my head for many years' when he wrote to Pinker about it on 19 October 1900, he asked that Pinker show it 'to one or two of the best periodicals', and, if they turned it down, 'someone will publish it as a volume when the time has come' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 97-98). He sent two copies of revised typescripts to Pinker a year later, on 6 October 1901, telling Pinker that he was 'more anxious about the fate of "An Author at Grass" than I have been about anything I have written for years', but if no serial publication could be found, to have it published in volume form no later than the next spring, hopefully on 'good print and paper' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 256). William Leonard Courtney (1850-1928), editor of the *Fortnightly Review* since 1894, accepted it and it was published in the May, August, November and February issues. Despite its appearing in their own *Fortnightly Review*, Chapman & Hall would not meet Pinker's price of £350 for a lease of the copyright for five years for both serial and book rights (NYPL letter). Eveleigh Nash saw the series running in the *Fortnightly Review* and was so struck by it that he went to see Pinker and secured the volume rights for Constable (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 312, quoting Nash's autobiography *I liked the Life I Lived*, Murray, 1941, 53-55). There were four payments for the serial, three in 1902 and one in 1903, corresponding to the serial's publication: part 1 paid £33 5s 6d, part 2 paid £35 8d, part 3, £33 15s, and part 4, £30 10s, totalling £132 11s 2d. Constable contracted for a £100 advance and royalties of 20%. From Constable, Gissing recorded receiving an advance of £88 9s and royalty payments of £77 3s 4d for a total of £166 12s 4d. The serial and book brought Gissing a total of £299 3s 6d.

Gissing's novels also ran as serials in European translations. Ten novels were translated during Gissing's lifetime, beginning with *Demos*. Coustillas lists two European translations of it (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 40), an abridged Russian translation serialized monthly in *Vestnik Evropy* (St Petersburg) January to May 1891 and a Polish translation in *Niwa* (Warsaw), 15 July 1891 to 15 May 1892. A letter to Bertz in December 1889 implies that Bertz was working on an abridgement of *Demos*, probably for serial publication in Germany, but none has been discovered (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 167).

Russian translations of Gissing were numerous and included *A Life's Morning* in 1890, *New Grub Street* and *Thyrza* in 1891, *Eve's Ransom* in 1895, and an abridged version of *The Nether World* in 1898. Gissing had sold the copyright to Smith, Elder and received nothing for the Russian translations, but neither did Smith, Elder as no record of payment for them appears in their ledgers. Two French translations of Gissing novels also appeared. Gabrielle Fleury's translation of *New Grub Street*, 'La Rue des Meurt-de-faim', appeared in *Journal des Débats*, February to June 1901 (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 116-117), Gabrielle having paid Smith £10 10s for the rights. Georges Art's translation of *Eve's Ransom* appeared in the *Revue de Paris* as 'La Rançon d'Eve' from April to May 1898. Art had paid £10 for the translation rights. Finally, *New Grub Street* also appeared in a German translation in the Hungarian *Pester Lloyd Supplement* (Budapest, December 1891 to April 1892) as *Ein Mann des Tages*, translated by Adele Berger, who paid Smith, Elder £8 for the rights.

Coustillas' *Bibliography* records 82 short stories (see Appendix, Table 7) that Gissing published between 1884 and 1904 in twenty four different periodicals (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 463-491). One collected edition, *Human Odds and Ends* (1898), was published during his lifetime and several collections were published in the years

after his death. Gissing wrote several of the stories on his own initiative but most were written at the request of magazine editors, particularly Jerome K. Jerome and C.K. Shorter, Shorter alone being responsible for the publication of 47 of Gissing's stories. Twenty stories, part of a series, were published in the *Sketch*, six in the *Illustrated London News*, one in *The Sphere*, and twenty in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, all edited by Shorter. Except for four stories published in the *Illustrated London News* in 1902, placed by Pinker, Gissing dealt directly with Shorter on all of those stories and not through his agents, Colles and Pinker who generally handled most of his sales. Gissing wrote to Shorter on 15 December 1901, advising him that since he was no longer living in England, he 'put all [his] business into the hands of Mr. Pinker; you will admit, I think, that this is a case where the literary agent becomes not merely useful, but indispensable' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 291). The editors of the *Letters* noted that Shorter disliked agents and had written in the *Daily Chronicle* in 1895 that because of the numerous Gissing stories he had published, Gissing would be discovered by agents and 'self-respecting editors will have to dispense with his work'. Writing to Thomas Hardy in September 1895 about the 'Human Odds and Ends' series, Gissing felt 'they were not worth much' but 'Shorter tells me that this kind of thing extends one's public' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VI, 21-22). He said much the same to Bertz a few months earlier: 'The small stories are, for the most part, poor stuff, but they keep me alive' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 351). Whether he meant they kept him alive financially or by keeping his name before the public is unclear from the letter. And, although in that letter he tells Bertz that he worked slowly, in fact they were pieces he could do quickly. Twenty-seven of the stories took two days each to write, 26 took only one, most of those being for a series of 20 stories Gissing wrote for *Sketch* and six more of about 1,000 words for Jerome K. Jerome's *To-Day*. In comparison, the novels he wrote between 1889 and 1894

took him from 5 (*Denzil Quarrier*) to 18 weeks (*Born in Exile*) to write, while *Eve's Ransom*, written for serialization, took 25 days (Gissing, *London* 366, 368-69).

Despite the facility Gissing had for writing short stories, he actually wrote few of them each year, except for 1895 when he wrote 27, eleven of those for *Sketch*, and six for *To-Day*, and 1896 when 18 were published, nine of them for *Sketch*. In 1895 he had sold *Sleeping Fires*, *Eve's Ransom*, *The Paying Guest* and the Lawrence and Bullen edition of *The Unclassed*, earning over £300. In 1896 he earned £79 16s 1d from royalties and half profits, £78 12s 6d on the first half of his advance for *The Whirlpool*, or a total of £157 8s 7d for volume publication. His short stories in that year earned £131 5s. The following year was his 'Year of Terror' when he only earned £101 13s 4d, but he only sold one short story, 'Simple Simon', for £5, so it does not seem that he wrote the stories as a quick source of income.

Prior to 1893 Gissing had earned a total of 13 guineas for his two short stories published in the United Kingdom, 'Phoebe's Fortune' and 'Letty Coe', published in Bentley's *Temple Bar* along with a poem, 'Song'. Bentley had taken the poem in October 1883 and Gissing was hoping that he would get 10 guineas for the stories. In the end he received a guinea for the poem, and 12 guineas for the stories (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 173; 'Account of Books', 1883; Coustillas, *George Gissing* 463).<sup>67</sup> When he saw the proofs for 'Phoebe's Fortune' in January 1884 they did not bear his name as author, as *Temple Bar* often printed stories without attribution. Gissing added his name to the proofs and the story appeared with it (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 191). As often

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<sup>67</sup> In a letter to Algernon on 30 October Gissing wrote that the 'little poem of three verses' paid a guinea and took him seven minutes to compose (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 173, 177). It was also reprinted in *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly*, June 1884 (*Bibliography*, 496). Gissing had also submitted poems to *The Cornhill* in September 1883 but they were not accepted (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 165). Gissing had sent some of his poetry to Swinburne in October 1883 who graciously returned the manuscript with pencilled-in notes and a reply that he found Gissing to have a 'genuine power of language', and that Gissing's pessimism might make some think he was following other pessimistic poets (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 172-173.) No other poems by Gissing were published during his lifetime and only a few, written in his youth, have been published since (*Bibliography* 495-497).

in dealing with Bentley, Gissing was led to expect more than Bentley would eventually pay. He wrote to Algernon on 27 February that Bentley would pay 8 guineas for each story but in the end Gissing only received six (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 463, *Letters* II, 200). Originally titled 'Phoebe's Fortune', 'Phoebe' was also translated into German by Bertz as 'Phöbes Glück', appearing in *Aus fremden Zungen* in 1891 and collected in *Das Kind und andere Novellen*, 1892. 'Letty Coe' was bought by Bentley in 1884 but he did not publish it until *New Grub Street* appeared in 1891 (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 463). It also appeared in America in *Living Age*, Oct 3 1891 (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 290, note to letters to Colles 30 January 1895 telling Colles to accept whatever Jerome would offer for American rights to his 'Nobodies at Home' stories).

In 1893, Gissing published five short stories, earning £71 5s. The first, 'A Victim of Circumstances' was sent to *Blackwood's Magazine* on 25 November 1891. It was accepted but did not appear for almost a year after acceptance and then only after Gissing demanded either payment or the return of the manuscript. (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 464). In March 1893 C.K. Shorter asked Gissing to write something 'like the bank holiday scene' in "Nether World" and in return Gissing wrote 'Lou and Liz' for Shorter's *English Illustrated Magazine* (Gissing, *London* 300). Shorter would also take 'Fleet-footed Hester' and 'Muse of the Halls' for the *Illustrated London News*. Gissing was now using Colles to sell his short stories and was pleased to get a letter from him on 7 November 1893 saying that he had sold 'The Day of Silence' to the *National Review* 'at 30 shillings a page of 460 words. He calls it "an inimitable piece of work" – pooh! But good news' (Gissing, *London* 320). He would later receive £1 for a translation by Georges Art, ('Le logis désert' *La Revue Bleue*, 1895). It was also published in America in *Living Age*, 30 December 1893.

When Gissing and Shorter agreed on the serialization of *Eve's Ransom* in January 1894, Gissing also left him with six stories, 'The Honeymoon,' 'Comrades in Arms', 'Pessimist of Plato Road', 'A Midsummer Madness', 'The Poet's Portmanteau' and 'In Honour Bound'. Shorter accepted all of them for the *English Illustrated Magazine*, paying £88 4s or £12 guineas each for them and for 'Our Mr. Jupp', twice what he had received from Bentley in 1893. (Gissing, *London* 323, 327, 330, 368). Shorter only wanted the British rights and wanted Gissing to retain the American but Gissing gave him all the rights as he couldn't sell the American rights himself (Gissing, *London* 323). Why Gissing made that decision is puzzling as he had already retained Colles who would have been able to negotiate the American rights. Two of them were later reprinted in America, 'The Poet's Portmanteau' and 'In Honour Bound', the former in the *Union and Advertiser* (Rochester, New York) for 21 March 1896, the latter in the *Living Age* 25 May 1895 (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 469-470). Shorter had already published two Gissing stories in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, 'Lou and Liz' in August and 'Muse of the Halls' in the Christmas number, Gissing complaining that 'The scoundrels only pay in the middle of the month after publication' (Gissing, *London* 324). Gissing received 11 guineas for the first and 12 guineas for the latter. He was paid the same amount for 'Fleet-Footed Hester', published in the Christmas issue of Shorter's other magazine, the *Illustrated London News* (Gissing, *London* 310, 368). Although Gissing would call Shorter a blackguard for not answering two of his letters in the spring of 1894 (Gissing, *London* 337), he was quite happy to buy a copy of the June 1894 issue of the *English Illustrated Magazine* while visiting his father's birthplace, and thinking how pleased his father would have been that his son's work would be sold across all of England (Gissing, *London* 338).

Jerome K. Jerome (1859–1927), was an actor before becoming a journalist and novelist. His first book *On the Stage - and Off* (1885) was followed by *The Idle Thoughts of*

*an Idle Fellow* (1886) and the classic *Three Men in a Boat* (1889). In 1892 Jerome, with Robert Barr and George Brown Burgin, founded *The Idler*, with Jerome as sole editor from 1895 to 1897. In 1893 Jerome founded the weekly *To-Day* but the loss of £9,000 to a libel action in 1897 forced him to sell his share in both magazines. In 1894 Gissing, who had written in his diary in 1891 about the miseries of living in lodgings being a subject for a collection of short stories (Gissing, *London* 253), proposed to Colles a series on that theme titled 'At a Week's Notice' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 266). Gissing had noted an item in Jerome K. Jerome's *To-day* under the title 'The Diary of a Bookseller', written by Ernest Bramah Smith, then a *To-Day* editor and later author of *The Wallet of Kai Lung*, in which he wrote that his 'old customer' Gissing, whose 'novels are so unique that he will surely find his way into the very front rank' was back from Italy and that anyone meeting him in his shop would notice his 'striking personality. He is a tallish man with luxuriant auburn hair, and a face singularly full of intelligence and sympathy. Messrs. Lawrence & Bullen have ready his new novel, "In the Year of Jubilee," in 3 vols.' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 267, note 2). Having already used this means to advertise Gissing, Jerome was amenable to accepting stories by Gissing and took Colles' offer of the idea for the series, publishing them under the title of 'Nobodies at Home'. They were to be 1,000 words, with a payment of £3 each, but there was some disagreement about word count. On 19 January 1895 Gissing asked Colles to see Jerome and tell him if Gissing's method of counting was wrong. Gissing counted not word by word but by averaging 'the number of words in a line, & that blanks, whether in dialogue or paragraphing, counted as words. Indeed I don't see how otherwise words can be reckoned; impossible that it should mean the absolute total of words in the composition' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 286).

As noted above, some of Gissing's short stories were reprinted abroad or in translations. There were New Zealand and American reprints, French, German and

Polish translations of his stories during his lifetime. Gissing was paid for two of the American reprints: 'At Nightfall' was sold by Colles in 1898 for \$65 to *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*. 'The Scrupulous Father' was sold by Pinker to *Truth* in New York for £21 3d and to the *Cornhill* for 13 guineas. 'Our Learned Fellow-Townsmen', appearing first in the *English Illustrated Magazine* (XVI, May 1896, 49-56), was reprinted in the *New York Times*, 20 and 21 March 1896, both times on page 9. The story was copyrighted in America in 1896 by Bacheller, Johnson & Bacheller owners of the New York Press Syndicate, and was part of a series announced the same day as 'High-Class Fiction' to be run for six months in the *New York Times* and featuring Owen Wister, Grant Allen, Doyle, and others. It was also reprinted in the *Syracuse Daily Journal* 20 and 21 March 1896. Several of the *New York Times* stories were printed with elaborate title cuts and illustrations, as was Gissing's. Two stories appeared in the *Canterbury Times* in New Zealand, 'An Inspiration', originally published in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, and 'A Yorkshire Lass', originally sold to *Cosmopolis* for £20 (Gissing, *London* 411, 412; Coustillas, *George Gissing* 479). 'A Poor Gentleman', placed by Pinker in 1898 for £14 7s 1d in the *Pall Mall Magazine*, was translated into French by Gabrielle as 'Un philanthrope malgré lui' in *La Revue Bleue* 17 March 1900 and into Polish as 'Filantrop mimo woli' in *Czas*, 1902 (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 480).

In addition to serializations, short stories, and poems, Gissing also wrote book chapters, essays, and prefaces. *The Art of Authorship*, edited by George Bainton (James Clarke, 1890), *Questions at Issue*, edited by Edmund Gosse (Heinemann, 1893) ; and *Pen and Pencil: A Souvenir of the "Press Bazaar"...* for the benefit of the London Hospital... 1898. (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 445-447), all included Gissing letters that were reprinted *gratis*. His most famous collection of prefaces, recently collected and reissued by



Coustillas, were on Charles Dickens.<sup>68</sup> Gissing wrote several prefaces for the Rochester Edition of the works of Charles Dickens, commissioned in June 1898 by Methuen in response to the success of Gissing's *Charles Dickens, a Critical Study* and probably also because Gissing was in the process of publishing *A Town Traveller* with them. Gissing's prefaces were a selling point for the series which was issued in cloth 8vo at 3 shillings and in leather at 4s 6d. Although Gissing wrote eleven prefaces only six titles in the series were published: *Picknick Papers* (1899), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1900), *Bleak House* (1900), *Oliver Twist* (1900), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1901), and *Barnaby Rudge* (1901). Gissing sent Methuen's request for the prefaces to Colles on 10 June 1898, leaving the negotiations to him (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 99), but still corresponding with Methuen (as Stedman) on the length of the introductions, proposing that they not exceed ten pages (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 100). Besides those published, Gissing did introductions for *The Christmas Books*, *Domby & Sons*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *David Copperfield*, and *Boz*. He told Colles on 23 June 1898 that 10 guineas for each would be acceptable as he 'could hardly expect an interest in the series' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VII, 104-105). Gissing accounts show payments (after Colles deductions) of £9 for *Picknick*, of £9 9s each for *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Bleak House*, *Oliver Twist*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and the *Christmas Books*, and a lump-sum payment of £44 12s 6d for *Domby*, *Chuzzlewit*, *Copperfield*, *Boz* & *Rudge* in 1901. In the same year, replying to F.D. Kittrou, who supplied notes for this series and was editor of the limited edition *David Copperfield*, published by George D. Sproul, for which Gissing contributed another introduction, Gissing commented on the Rochester edition not selling well, adding 'But what can Mr Methuen expect of a publication appearing at such long intervals, & which is never advertised?' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 236). Gissing's introduction to the limited

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<sup>68</sup> George Gissing, *Collected works of George Gissing on Charles Dickens*, (Grayswood, Surrey: Grayswood Press, 2004-2005).

edition of *David Copperfield* was published in 1903. There were to be three editions, to be published in multi-volume sets but the series was never completed (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 452; *Letters* VIII, 236 note 1). Gissing accepted the offer to write the preface, asking for 15 guineas for 3000 words (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 236). He personally signed each copy of the printed introduction and lists a payment for the signing in his Account of Books 1902 as £6, although in his letter of 5 July 1902 (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 408) he agreed to £5 for signing 300 sheets. Since the letter talks about accepting a 'change', it may have been for the lower fee. Gissing wrote three further pieces on Dickens: 'Dickens in Memory: A Personal View' appeared in *Literature*, 21 December 1901. Frank Arthur Mumby, the editor of *Literature* and for the *Critic* [New York] requested 1,500 to 2,000 words on Dickens for those journals in 1902. Dickens referred him to Pinker and the payment was included in the sum of £68 3s 7d along with the payment for John Forster's *Life of Dickens*, shortened and edited by Gissing and published in 1903 by Chapman and Hall as *Forster's Life of Dickens* (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 505). Two reviews appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*, one entitled 'Mr. Swinburne on Dickens' (25 July 1902). It was unsigned, which is unusual for Gissing, but he was paid £4 4s (Gissing, *London* 548). He also wrote another unsigned review, 'Mr. Kittons's Life of Dickens' for the *Times Literary Supplement*, 15 Aug. 1902, for which he was paid £5 5s. He was amused that the *Times Literary Supplement* should ask him for a review, remarking to Clara Collett that 'If I live a few more years, I may hope to have earned in a quarter of a century the reputation which twenty authors of to-day have achieved by the publication of a couple of volumes' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 371-72).

Gissing did some minor journalism, briefly writing notes and commentaries for papers in England and Russia. After writing *Workers in the Dawn*, Gissing was asked by John Morley, whom he had met through Frederic Harrison, to write for the *Pall Mall*

*Gazette* and *Fortnightly Review* (Gissing, *Collected Letters* I, 296). Gissing wrote 'Notes on Social Democracy', a three-part series that ran in the *Pall Mall Gazette* from 9 to 14 September, 1880. He was paid 8 guineas for the series (Gissing, *Collected Letters* I, 302). From February 1881 through November 1882, Gissing wrote a quarterly column 'Correspondence from London' on the 'political, social & literary affairs of England' for *Vestnik Evropy*, a St Petersburg monthly. Turgenev, acting on behalf of the editor, had been given Gissing's name by Edward Beesley, a history professor at University College, London and friend of Frederic Harrison. Turgenev, in his letter of 27 November 1880, offered Gissing £8 for each of the eight columns (Gissing, *Collected Letters* I, 309-10, 315). The remainder of Gissing's writing consisted of five articles written between 1883 and 1901. An essay 'On Battersea Bridge' appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 November 1883. Gissing was paid £2 5s for it (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 184). He was paid £1 11s 6d for 1,000 words for 'The Place of Realism in Fiction' in the *The Humanitarian*, VII, no. 1 July 1895, 14-16 (Gissing, *London* 373).

His travels in Italy inspired 'At the Grave of Alaric,' published in the *Daily Chronicle* on 31 May 1898. Gissing was paid £3 3s but the receipt of the manuscript and eventual publication were never acknowledged and Gissing, after seeing it in print on 31 May, wrote to the editor on 18 June 1898 that 'I have since dreamt of cheques. If I should have told my dreams in another quarter, pray excuse me & set me right' (see Coustillas, *George Gissing* 94 and *Letters* VII, 101). A cheque followed. The *Review of the Week* published his essay 'Tyrtaeus', (I, no. 1, 4 Nov. 1899, 6-7). The editor offered 30s for Gissing to contribute to the first issue of the *Review*. Gissing declined at first but accepted when the offer was raised to £2 2s for 740 words and he was eventually paid £2 8s. It was translated into French, perhaps by Gabrielle Fleury, and published in *Le Gaulois du Dimanche* 25-26 November as 'La poésie guerrière des Impérialistes Anglais' (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 504). Gissing's last periodical publication, 'Bed of Odysseus'

appeared in *Student: the Edinburgh University Magazine*, ‘a special issue for the new century’, January 1901. Coustillas’ *George Gissing* (504) describes this as being part of the *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* but there is no mention of it in Gissing’s diary or letters.

In summary, Gissing earned almost £1,640 from his serials, stories, and essays, comprising of £452 11s 2d for his serializations, approximately £982 for the short stories he published after his return to England in 1877, including the collected volume *Human Odds and Ends*, and £205 for his prefaces and other periodical writings. His total writing income, as recorded in his ‘Account of Books’ and the Lilly Library manuscript account amounted to £4,975 14s 1d.<sup>69</sup> Serial and short story publication provided a third of his total overall income and had the further benefit for Gissing and his publishers of making his name more prominent, possibly helping the sales of his novels. Sales of his entire Smith, Elder titles show slight spikes in sales in 1896 and a smaller spike in 1898, when his stories appeared, following a declining period of all of those titles since 1893. The £27 spike in sales in 1896 coincides with the publication of 27 short stories and serialisation of *Eve’s Ransom* in 1895 and the publication of 18 more stories in 1896. In 1897 and 1898 the small £4 spike of 1898 follows the publication of *The Whirlpool* in 1897 and coincides with his busy year of 1898 when *Human Odds and Ends*, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* and *The Town Traveller* all appeared, but when his short story output totalled only seven stories.

Gissing disdained journalism, criticising Milvain for ‘inducing people to give themselves mental indigestion’ (*New Grub Street* 23). So did Matthew Arnold, yet both wrote for the monthly magazines (Morton 66). They could hardly avoid them. From 1870 to 1900 the number of newspapers in England grew from 1,390 to 2,448 and magazines from 626 to 2,446. Although Arnold Bennett could earn £5,000 a year by the

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<sup>69</sup> The ‘Account of Books’ does not record his six-guinea payment for ‘Letty Coe’ but is otherwise accurate.

time of his death in 1931, few authors made a steady living at journalism (Bonham-Carter, II, 140). In *New Grub Street* Alfred Yule, 'a battered man of letters' (17) lives by writing for literary journals, and has never had a income over £250 and often less (*New Grub Street* 332). For novelists it meant a wider audience. Walter Besant estimated that 'a novelist of respectable – if not the highest – rank' could have a work published in the *Illustrated London News*, an American paper, an Australian paper, and have a possible readership of over 250,000 (Besant 1899, 31-32). Gissing does not seem to have been given over to such speculation. He serialized novels when he felt the format appropriate and wrote short stories when he felt the payment acceptable and had the time available as he was foremost a novelist and saw 'serious' novels as something that belonged only in volume format. Believing newspaper syndication to be beneath his status, Gissing refused to pursue syndication of his novels through Tillotson's. Unlike Milvain, who would 'have gone shrewdly to work with magazines and newspapers and foreign publishers, and -- all sorts of people', Gissing chose to concentrate on his novels, leaving serialization to his agents and not aggressively pursuing the market for short stories after 1895-1896. Gissing's contemporaries, James Payn, Grant Allen, and others wrote for broader markets and perhaps saw themselves as writers rather than as novelists, and would write in any format that would pay. Gissing, like Reardon, would not compromise even though, just as Milvain saw literature as a trade that would bring him his 'thousand a year' (*New Grub Street* 6), Gissing, in 1899 told his agent, James Brand Pinker, that 'I look to you to get me an income of a thousand a year before we have done' (Gissing, *Collected Letters*, VII, 382). Gissing never achieved his thousand, in part because he passed up opportunities which would have supplemented his income and widened his market. Such fastidiousness never troubled Grant Allen or Henry James, who wrote Pinker that he would gladly divide and cut *The Golden Bowl* for serialization: James knew that his earnings were dependent not on his book sales but on

American and British serialization (Anesko 168-169). James averaged just under £1,000 (£913) a year between 1880 and 1903 and he earned that only with the additional income his American sales and serializations brought him.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Figures based on a table of Henry James' earnings in Anesko 176.

## Chapter 7: Light Upon Dark Places

One of the questions posed by *New Grub Street* is whether an author could live solely by writing in a period in which new methods of publishing were appearing and, if so, could an author do it without sacrificing art to commerce? The latter aspect of the question can be seen in the contrast between the careers of Gissing and Payn. Payn, writing in *The Nineteenth Century* (December 1879) argued that authors were professionals, not artists (Pierce 3). Gissing would argue that some were both. Gissing sometimes wrote below himself and for the market – the *Town Traveller* is an example – but he never wrote solely for the market and its changing tastes, as Payn and other writers did (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VI, 305).

Because he did not write for the popular market, Gissing suffered economically: a contemporary critic summed up the era's perception of Gissing when she noted that his novels were 'too powerful to be ignored, and too depressing to be forgotten'.<sup>71</sup> His novels were never written to be popular and therefore his audience was limited. The extent of his market could be estimated from the number of people who were willing to purchase his novels as soon as they became affordable. If we look at the sales of his Smith, Elder cheap editions in their first two years, his average sales were about 3,300. Of those, *Demos* sold 3,800 and *A Life's Morning*, only 2,500, but the lower sales were probably a factor of *A Life's Morning* going directly from serialization to a two-shilling edition. The numbers of his readers were never large, but they were sufficient and they were supported in their opinion by reviews that were generally favourable, even if the reviewers did find his work depressing and pessimistic. Since authors are paid for their sales and not for their reputations, Gissing's earnings could never match those of Payn, but they were sufficient to enable Gissing to answer the question of economic survival

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<sup>71</sup> Agnes Repplier, *Compromises*, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1904) 26.

in the affirmative. Gissing may not have been happy with the size of his income but he was able to tell Colles that 'Since 1886 I have managed to *live* by literature-- or, let us say, by writing; & the fact seems to be rather wonderful, for never have I tried to please the public, & I have, in fact, pleased only the minutest fraction of it' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* V, 183)

As a corollary to the economic survival of the author, what was the economic relationship between authors and publishers? Was it solely one of exploitation of powerless authors by ruthless publishers, or was it a case of both author and publisher struggling together with new formats and to serve new markets?

The relations between author and publisher should ideally be one of cooperation and partnership, both needing the other in their mutual goal of producing a product that will find favour with critics and the public. Both could be said to seek the same goals: fame and fortune, in either modest or immodest quantities, but the basic goal remains for the author to have his work read, his name known, and to be rewarded sufficiently for his work to be able to devote his time to writing and have sufficient income to support himself and his family. The publisher's goal is to have the name of his house known and respected and to make sufficient profit to remain in business, pay his authors, printers, binders, illustrators and staff, and support his own family. In most instances, the author-publisher relationship does work, but it can sometimes lead to conflict. While few authors have the power of a Dickens, a Trollope, or a George Elliot, and a public following that would give an author an advantage over a publisher, publishers have a position of power because they control the capital and means of production of most novels and can use, if not outright exploit authors to further the goals of the publishing house. Although authors argue that without their work the publisher would have no books, this has rarely proved a means for giving authors more



power. The market towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century provided many individuals who were willing to write for a living, leaving publishers in the position of being able to commission work when suitable – or affordable – material did not present itself at their doors, or when, in competition with other publishers, they developed new marketing formulas or formats. T. Fisher Unwin's Pseudonym and Autonym Libraries are a case in point.

The Pseudonym Library in particular was marketed not on the names of its authors, but on the quality of its pseudonymous fiction and the mystery of its author's identity. It was a perfect example of fiction as a commodity and the faceless author as mere workman. Gissing was unsure until the last minute in which Library *Sleeping Fires* should appear, finally opting to have it appear under his name in the Autonym. In those Libraries and in other publishers' series, the author's work is no longer a shared concern of the publisher and author but merely a commodity to be marketed to appeal to current taste. The author may lose any trust in his partnership with the publisher to respect his work, to reward him appropriately, to market it aggressively, or to report his sales honestly. This was especially true when many authors signed agreements for half-profit publishing, or paid all or part of the publishing costs, and when many contracts were informal and vague. The distrust existed early in publishing. As an example, Rhoda Broughton questioned Bentley's accounting for advertising expenses for her novel *Cometh up as a Flower* in 1867 (Gettmann 106). It was because of the growing distrust between author and publisher that the Society of Authors was formed in 1883. Henry James said of the Society of Authors that he belonged to it but did not know what it did (James 138). Gissing was ambivalent about the Society and only made use of its services in 1901 when he approached the Society for advice when Methuen wanted to use Gissing's prefaces written for the Rochester editions of Dickens in another edition (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 191, 239, 267). Although Gissing was ambivalent about

the Society of Authors, he joined it because he felt an obligation to do so when he was using Colles as his agent and assumed, incorrectly, that one needed to belong to the Society to use his services (Gissing, *London* 327). His attitude towards publishers was also generally one of distrust and conflict. To Gissing, George Smith was a scoundrel (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 332). Chapman, whom Gissing found to be pleasant at their first meeting, but the ‘merest man of business’ (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 197) would become to him ‘that unspeakable “Chap” in Henrietta Street’, a blackguard, a ‘man ... absolutely not to be trusted’ (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 200, 364; III, 10, 47). These epithets were earned after Chapman paid Gissing nothing for *Isabel Clarendon*, published on half-profits without even an accounting for costs or copies sold. Gissing was also paid far less than he had been verbally promised for *The Unclassed*.<sup>72</sup> Gissing experienced problems from his first dealings with publishers. On 31 March 1881 he wrote to Algernon that he had finally received a cheque for 16 shillings for *Workers in the Dawn*: ‘Author’s share of proceeds up to last Xmas. He makes out that 49 copies have been sold and £24 odd spent on advertising. Of course I have no check upon him; & I must say I never expected to have a *cheque* either!’ (Gissing, *Collected Letters* I, 22). If Gissing was treated thusly by publishers of some repute, how did other novice authors fare among more unscrupulous publishers?

The Society of Authors held a meeting of authors and publishers in London in 1887 with a public discussion of authors’ resentment of publishers. This spilled over from the meeting room into the pages of the *Times* and into a book that reprinted the Society’s charges and the publishers’ responses, *The Grievances Between Authors & Publishers* (1887). The responses in the *Times* indicate that the debate must have been heated. Blackwood and Sons thought the Society lacked practical knowledge of

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<sup>72</sup> On 20 February 1884 Gissing wrote Algernon that Chapman had verberally offered £50 and a royalty of 5s on every copy after 400 but within two weeks the written agreement arrived and the payment had been changed to £30 (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 198, 200).

publishing and suggested that they open their own firm and realize the ‘pleasant pastime’ of investing capital and dealing with printers, papermakers, advertising agents and ‘unsuccessful authors’ to gain a better insight into the business (*Times* 28 March 1887: 3). A *Times* leader implied that the Society had triumphed in part when Longman and other publishers fulfilled the Society’s demand for open access to their records. The *Times* reported that on the second day of the conference, Edmund Gosse,

who was received with cheers, said that unsatisfactory relations of author to publisher by no means absorbed the whole attention of the Society....The author had also to be defended against the wicked public.... It was useless to attempt to run counter to the natural laws of economy or to force uninterested readers to buy books against their will. Authorship must be looked upon as a profession, subject, like other professions, to the laws of supply and demand’ (*Times*, 10 March 1887: 8).

On 11 March 1887 the Society announced in the *Times* that Bentley had also agreed to furnish vouchers that would document their payments for advertising and other publishing costs. John Murray wrote to say that his authors had always had access to his accounts and he believed other major publishers did the same. Edmund Gosse saw the major problem to be one where the author surrendered his rights to a book that would prove immensely profitable in the future. He suggested that the form of contract the *Société des Gens de Lettres* adopted be used, a contract that limited the license of the copyright of a book to a single edition or stipulated number of copies, or to publication in a single periodical (*Times* 11 March 1887: 10). Smith, Elder replied that Longman’s furnishing of vouchers was something that publishers of repute would willingly do, but also suggested that the most contentious issue was that of advertising charges, since the costs of paper and printing were easily ascertained. They recommended that rather than furnishing vouchers for each item, publishers present their accounts in a manner that would make them liable to charges of fraud if they were found to be incorrect (*Times* 12 March 1887: 6). George Smith objected to the blanket assertion that it was ‘the custom of publishers to render fraudulent accounts’ and doubted that supplying vouchers

would improve the atmosphere between authors and publishers, proposing instead that a pro forma statement, of which he gives an example (see Appendix, Figure 1), would suffice. Smith insists that publishing was speculative, and that ‘a large number of every publisher’s speculations involve a loss; and on striking the average of his gains and losses, an excessive profit is most certainly not left to him’. Smith found unspecified errors in Besant’s calculations and found his example of 10,000 copies of a book to be impossible and extraordinary. Smith’s ‘Pro forma Account of a Book Published at the Price of 14s’ follows the layout of his own ledgers, with the important difference that the *Times* example listed the cash discounts of 5 per cent for printing and paper and 6 per cent for binding. The line for advertising specifies that it would be accompanied by a list of actual costs and discounts. The item for postage and carriage carries a line that did appear in Smith’s ledgers for Gissing, namely a charge for the ‘proportion of paper and printing catalogues’. As this sample entry was for half-profits, there is a five per-cent deduction for cash advanced. A five per-cent ‘allowance to cover bad debts and sundries’ is included; this was an item found in Smith’s ledger entry for Conan Doyle’s *The White Company*, also published on a profit-sharing agreement (*Times* 24 March 1887, 18). Smith did provide his accounts for *The White Company* in the manner he described: the charge for advertising (£93 19s 1d, less Conan Doyle’s contribution of £20 and Smith’s of £10) carries the notation ‘as per accompanying list’.

In 1890, the Society published *The Methods of Publishing*, a handbook for young authors that served as a guide to novices, as a manifesto of the Society, and as a portrait of the Society’s understanding of the business of publishing. In the preface to the second edition (1891), the author, S. Squire Sprigge, called it an effort to ‘let light upon dark places, upon the basis of knowledge from a source that has never previously existed’ (Sprigge v.) The publishers disputed the Society’s arguments and the Society was certainly guilty of over-simplifying, and, by over-simplifying, distorting the true

picture, but they were right in that there were dark places in which authors' accounts were buried, partly because of the complexity of publishing and its multiple accounts for purchases, sales, expenses, and varying contract types. Reconstructing actual expenses and receipts would have been difficult then and is almost impossible today since few day books or supplier receipts have survived and, like nineteenth century authors, we must rely solely on the surviving copyright ledgers and publishers' statements of accounts to their authors.

The Society's manuals and Besant's comments as Society Chairman present a contemporary critical evaluation of publishers' contracts and business practices. The first edition of *Methods of Publishing* appeared in 1890, with the second edition following two months after, in November 1890 but with an 1891 imprint (Sprigge vi). Additional material, written by G. Herbert Thring, was published in 1898 as *Addenda to the Methods of Publishing*.<sup>73</sup> *Methods* was predated by an earlier 1889 publication of the Incorporated Society of Authors, *The Cost of Production: Being Specimens of the Pages and Type in More Common Use, with Estimates of the Cost of Composition, Printing, Paper, Binding, etc. for the Production of a Book*. *The Cost of Production* went into two later editions in 1891, with the third edition revised in November 1891 to reflect an increase in the wages of compositors and printers. All three were still available from the Society at least as late as the end of the century: Besant's *The Pen and the Book*, privately printed and published in 1899 carries advertising for *The Cost of Production* as available at 2s 6d, Sprigge's book is offered as *The Various Methods of Publication* at 3s, and the *Addenda* at 2s. The Appendix

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<sup>73</sup> Sir Samuel Squire Sprigge (1860-1937), son of a physician and landowner, was trained in medicine at Cambridge and at St George's Hospital. He was more interested in literature than in clinical practice and became Secretary of the Society of Authors from 1889 to 1892, serving as Chairman from 1911 to 1913. In 1893 he accepted a position as an assistant editor at the *Lancet* and in 1909 became Editor. He was knighted in 1921 and elected to the FRCS and FRCP. His other works were *Medicine and the Public* (1905), *The Society of French Authors* (1889), *Some Considerations of Medical Education* (1910). He was also editor of the *Autobiography of Walter Besant* (1902) (DNB). George Herbert Thring (1859-1941) was a solicitor and Secretary to the Society of Authors from 1892 to 1930. His publications include *Forms of Agreement* (1899) and in 1933, *The Marketing of Literary Property: Book and Serial Rights* (*The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*. Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 354 note 2).

to *The Pen and the Book*, written by George Meredith, mentions the two publications as about to appear in fourth and third editions respectively. Two of Besant's chapters in *The Pen and the Book* are titled 'The Cost of Production' (145-166) and 'The Methods of Publishing' (167-186) and, while covering much of the same ground as the earlier two, are much more of an attack on publishers than the Society publications, Besant preferring to use and emphasize words like 'THIEVING' (Besant 201).

There is no indication that Gissing was familiar with *Costs* or *Methods* but he was aware enough of the problems addressed by the Society to be using A.P. Watt as his agent by August 1891. *Methods of Publishing* deals with the valuing of literary property and Gissing's books belong to what it called the most difficult group to value, 'the great middle-class – the books which cannot be expected to have a very large sale, may have only a very small one, and yet are neither condemned from the first to actual failure, nor certain to achieve even the slightest success. Concerning the publication of these works it is sufficient to say that whoever runs the risk should reap a due share in the profits' (Sprigge 17). This would seem to imply that in novels like Gissing's there was some risk in publishing them, a risk that could be reflected in the amount a publisher would offer for the copyright. Sprigge said that a publisher offered 'to "take the risk" when he is very certain that there is none to take' (Sprigge 29). Sprigge may have been wrong in his assertion as there was one instance in Gissing's career in which a publisher did take a risk and lost: Bentley's purchase of the copyright of *Mrs Grundy's Enemies*. Other than that example, the publishers of Gissing's novels took little risk, as his copyright sales or advances were small, production costs modest, and the novels good enough to earn sufficient income to offset or minimize any losses. In the end Gissing's publishers may have earned more than Gissing, but his payments, either in copyright sale or in advances, were up-front payments, while his publishers had to absorb losses on early editions or in the first years of a printing, recovering their costs in small sums and only

after several years had passed. Gissing did experience callous and sometimes dishonest treatment from some of his publishers. The Society's publications and Besant's book were aimed as a warning to novice authors against signing contracts that would leave them at a disadvantage, and to be aware that they were generally not privy to the publishers' ledgers and should be wary of accepting publishers' accounts without question. Gissing certainly did not see the accounts for his first book, *Workers in the Dawn*, and, had he seen them would not necessarily have known if they were accurate. Because he made an outright sale of his copyright for *The Emancipated* he did not see Bentley's Publication Ledger (British Library Add. MS 6,600) detailing Bentley's loss on the title, but even if he had, that ledger in itself is misleading as it does not show the discounts Bentley received on the charges for paper, printing, and binding. Fortuitously, an amount and date that corresponds exactly to the charge for paper entered into the Publication Ledger appears in Bentley's Summary Ledger (British Library Add MS 46573, v. XIV, 1 April 1887 – 31 March 1896, 80). In the Publication Ledger there is a charge against *The Emancipated* of £75 3s to Clowes for printing. This sum appears in an entry for 10 February in the Summary Ledger divided into a payment of £71 7s 10d, with a 5% credit taken of £3 15s 2d. Charges for the paper and binding relating to *The Emancipated* were combined with other charges and so can not be identified, but they also were discounted.

It may be that such discounts were not entered into the Publication Ledger as they may have depended on cash payments, or volume, or payment dates and were thus not always applied. Conversely, it would be unlikely for a publisher to pass up a discount if at all possible, especially a large publisher with a steady cash flow. The half-

profits contract Chapman wrote for *Isabel Clarendon* took the discounts into account by specifically reserving them to themselves.<sup>74</sup>

In any case, given the clear indication of the printing discount being charged at full rate in the Publication Ledger, the other charges against *The Emancipated* should also have had 5% deducted to reflect the actual costs Bentley was paying. Given the clear indication of the printing discount being charged at full rate, and discounts of five percent shown for Grosvenor and Burn, the publication ledger does not reflect the actual cost for publishing *The Emancipated*. Applying the five percent discounts to printing (£3 15s 2d), paper (£2 6s 7d) and binding (£1 13s), the total savings are £7 14s 8d. This reduces Bentley's loss from £23 16s 5d to £16 1s 9d. With the £21 payment from Bullen, Bentley actually made profit of £4 18s 3d. And this is assuming that there were no discounts for the £129 16s 4d in advertising charges entered against *The Emancipated*.

Perhaps Bentley was merely careless with his figures, but if so, he was consistently careless with figures in his dealings with Gissing, offering 8 guineas for the short story *Phoebe* for *Temple Bar* but paying only 6, contracting to pay 50 guineas for *Mrs Grundy* but paying only £50 on 18 April 1883 and not paying the remaining £2 10s until 2 May. Gissing, like Bentley, may have forgotten that the agreement was for 50 guineas, as he told Algernon on receiving the cheque in April that it was 'most unpublisherlike behaviour & augurs well for future', but noted when the balance arrived in May that, though it was small, it 'makes all the difference of a complete set of togger', i.e., a new

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<sup>74</sup> The contract provided that 'The Publishers will debit the Work with the Invoice amounts paid for Printing, Paper, Advertising, and Binding; and with Ten per Cent. on the sums expended to defray the cost of the establishment. It is however mutually agreed that the Publishers shall be permitted to retain as their exclusive profit the Trade Cash Discounts which they may be able to obtain on Printing, Paper, Advertisement, or Binding Account.'



suit (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 130, 132; Ad. MS 46562, p. 286).<sup>75</sup> For Smith, Elder the only surviving ledgers are the Copyright Ledger. The Copyright Ledger provided a once-yearly summary listing costs and sales for each title. Its figures were derived from other sources, which would have been numerous. Clarence E. Allen's 1897 accounting manual, *Publishers' Accounts*, lists 20 different books, journals, and ledgers that an accountant might use simultaneously. Without access to the actual invoices and payment records there was no way for an author to know if his or her publisher was inflating prices, failing to pass on discounts, or lying about advertising expenses.

One example of how a novice author could be at a disadvantage can be seen in the relationship of Tinsley and Thomas Hardy. Tinsley published Hardy's *Desperate Remedies* (1871) on half-profits, but only on condition that Hardy pay £75 towards the costs. It was published in January in the traditional three-volume format in an edition of 500 copies. Production costs were £194 5s 6d and sales returned £238 10s 8d, with 280 copies sold at 15s and an additional 92 sold to Mudie and Smith at half price (Purdy). Under the half-profit system and with the author fronting an advance, Tinsley realized a return on the novel of £119 5s 2d, which he split with Hardy. Tinsley thus made a profit of £59 12s 7d and Hardy had a net loss of £15 7s 5d. Had the novel been published on the same terms as Hardy's next novel, *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), where Tinsley paid Hardy £30 for the copyright, the novel would have returned a profit of £25 14s 10d to Tinsley. The Society of Authors might have also questioned Tinsley's charge of £12 10s for corrections and £48 4s 9d for advertisements, as well as his paper (£29 14s) and printing costs (£75 12s 6d), but all of the charges were in line with what Smith, Elder were listing in their ledgers for the costs of Gissing's books. Smith, Elder budgeted their advertising costs at about a quarter of production costs for the three-

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<sup>75</sup> Gettmann finds Bentley's claim to the Macmillans that he was losing money on publishing Mrs Wood's novels 'puzzling' (Gettmann 114, note 2) and defends Bentley against others who were sceptical of his advertising charges.

volume novel and Tinsley is in line with their practice. Tinsley may have been less than honest with George Moore as well. Tinsley did ask Moore for the sum of £40 some time after *A Modern Lover* was published. Moore's brother Augustus recommended that their journalist friend James Davis 'will just write to him for his accounts and if they are not right he will make it the temperature of a red-hot poker for Mr. Tinsley'. In the end, Moore did not have to pay Tinsley's demand for £40, as a warehouse fire had destroyed all of the copies and insurance covered the loss (Frazier 404, note 106).

Sprigge begins his discussion of fiction by highlighting one point: novels were short-lived. Their circulating library sale would be followed by the sales of the cheap editions which might sell for years 'but the rush for it dies away in a few months, only, sadly to say, to be revived by the author's death' (Sprigge 12). In Gissing's case, his Smith, Elder novels only enjoyed strong sales in the first two years of issue in each format and his Lawrence and Bullen titles generally had a similar fate, earning their advance after two years and then returning declining royalty amounts, often under a pound and seldom paying more than two. *The Odd Women* did earn its 100 guinea advance within a year, paying a £26 5s royalty in 1894, but the royalty declined afterward, generally earning under £2 annually and earning at a total of £14 7s between 1895 and 1903. Gissing's sales did show a small rise after his death, but, as noted in the chapter on serials, anything that would attract attention to an author's name, including a new serial or the publication of a new novel, could have a modest but short-lived effect on sales. Most novels were things of the moment and their earnings minimal after the appearance of the first three volume or cheap editions.

The Society (and by the Society here I mean both its publications and Besant's writings in *The Pen and the Book*) was adamant in its insistence that the risk incurred by the publisher was slighter than publishers would admit, and the Society's publications

were meant to show how little the publisher did risk. The Society had a point in that the risk to a publisher was small, as long as books that lost money were outnumbered by books that earned a small profit. Over an entire list and over a period of years publishers did run little risk and only took big risks on big names, paying some authors far more than their novel would return, either on the wrong assumption that it would sell more than it would or on a closer calculation that acquiring or keeping a name would benefit the house, even if it would take years to recover from the loss. Smith, Elder lost money on some of Gissing's editions but made £629 3s 7d on them by the time of his death, £80 more than Gissing did on his copyrights.

To disabuse its readers that publishers risk was less than claimed, the Society produced their own accounts showing what they asserted were the costs they could obtain for paper, composition, printing, and binding. Besant, Secretary of the Palestine Exploration Fund for 18 years (1868-1886), had some familiarity both with publishing on behalf of the Fund and independently, as he and James Rice had paid for the printing and binding of *Ready Money Mortiboy*, placing it for commission sale with Tinsley. The Society's estimate of printing costs, considering differing quantities of paper, sheets, and type, are comparable to those appearing in the ledgers of the Smith, Elder or Bentley ledger accounts.<sup>76</sup> The Smith, Elder and Bentley ledger accounts, unlike the publishers' examples given in the Society's publications, were for internal use and were not based on half-profits or any other contract where the author would have an interest in the publisher's profits or losses: while they may not reflect discounts they were not necessarily designed to deceive authors. The biggest differences between the Society's accounts and those of the publishers are for binding charges and for

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<sup>76</sup>At least 7 titles were published during Besant's tenure, most 'by the Society', and one, in 1886 by Bentley, who advertised himself in 1875 as 'Publishers in Ordinary to her Majesty and to the Palestine Exploration Fund' (*Times* 9 April 1875, 12). After Besant left the Society turned to A.P. Watt as their publisher. Watt used Billing and Sons of Guildford, printers of many religious works for at least one of his Palestine Exploration Fund titles.

advertising. The Society estimated binding at 27s to 28s per hundred but Smith, Elder was consistently paying 34s 6s per hundred and Bentley was paying 44s per hundred. If they did receive 5% discounts on binding they would have paid 32s 9d and 41s 10d respectively, still much higher than the Society's estimates. Robert L. Patten, in his *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry for George Bentley quotes Sadleir and Griest on Bentley's love of elaborate bindings as a showcase for his publications – Bentley obviously did not opt for the Society's 'plain and serviceable [binding] quite as good as that used by publishers for general purpose' (Besant, 150). *The Emancipated* was bound in quarter cloth and decorated paper, with printed endpapers, not a lavish binding, but still beyond a 'general purpose' one.

Advertising for the three-volume first edition could be two to four times the £30 estimate of the Society, with Smith, Elder generally spending more than twice that amount and Bentley, who was known to spend heavily on advertising, spending over £120 on *The Emancipated*.<sup>77</sup> Smith, Elder's advertising for the later one-volume editions is closer to the Society's £20 estimate. It would be reasonable to assume that the first appearance of a novel would occasion the greatest amount of advertising, with subsequent editions, appearing after reviews and word-of-mouth recommendations requiring less expense. The Society's assumptions may also be what they would estimate for the general run of publishers, and not for publishers of the nature of Smith, Elder, Bentley, and the other older houses who had the capital to spend, who promoted heavily, and who produced books of a higher physical quality, or at least could be expected to do those things. The Society's claims attracted attention from the

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<sup>77</sup> According to Chapman (p. 7), Colburn and Bentley spent £27,000 from 1830-1832 on advertising and in 1852 the separate houses spent £5,000 each. According to Gettmann Bentley spent more on adverts than usual and generally spent at least half the copyright payment (Gettmann 313). Gettmann also defends Bentley against what seem to be suspicions by several authors that Bentley was exaggerating his advertising expenses (Gettmann 106-107). Given Bentley's less than honourable dealings with Gissing I would be hesitant to accept Bentley's accounts for advertising at face value.

publishers, not only with letters to the *Times* but also internally. The Bentley ledger (Add. MS 6,600) in the British Library has pasted into the front end leaves pages from the Society's pamphlet *The Grievances Between Authors & Publishers* containing a reprint of the exchange of letters along with a handwritten sheet headed 'Average cost of 3 volumes' with a table giving estimates for paper, printing, and binding for editions of varying numbers of copies. The presence of the pamphlet and the estimate in the ledger suggest that it did attract the attention of publishers, either to refute it or to at least examine their costs in comparison. What is unanswered, of course, is why the estimate was prepared. Was it for internal use or for comparison? Drawn up for a possible refutation or against anticipated questions from authors? The Bentley estimate for 500 copies given in Appendix, Table 6 comes from that slip.

The Society also provided examples of costs for one-volume editions. They are difficult to compare to Smith, Elder's costs as the Society quotes are for a one-volume edition of 272 pages in small pica using 17 sheets while Gissing's titles ran to 469 or more pages using 15 to 16 sheets and a smaller six-point typeface, something that the *Cost of Production* said could mean a higher composing cost (*Cost of Production*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 8). George Smith's sample account in the *Times* can not be compared with the Society's figures as his estimates are for a 1,500 copy edition of a 14-shilling book, unspecified as to novel or non-fiction.

For the one-volume edition the Society presumably includes what Smith, Elder listed as additional costs for printing covers or having blocks made for stamping the binding. Binding for a one-volume edition in cloth is the same for Smith, Elder and for the Society, 4d a volume.

The Society also left out all overhead costs, arguing that since publishers assumed that overhead expenses of booksellers and authors were not their concern;

authors should similarly assume that publishers' overheads should be of no concern to them (Besant 169-171). From Bentley's Supplementary Ledger we can get some idea of his overheads. In 1890 he paid £2,256 18s 6d in wages, £1,809 for his 18 regular staff, £385 11s 6d for monthly wages for six others, apparently warehousemen, £20 7s in bonuses and £42 for auditor's fees. Bentley had up to six readers in any one month in 1890 and for the year they were paid a total of £139 5s 6d under the heading 'Literary Reports'. His readers included two novelists, Mrs Featherstonehaugh, who had been with Bentley since the 1870s and had published six novels with him, and Adeline Sergeant (1851-1904), who would publish over 90 novels, six of them by Bentley (Gettmann 193).<sup>78</sup> Miss Sergeant earned £40 19s in 1890. She was the only one consistently paid in guineas, from 5 to 18 guineas at a time, but her activity dropped off after 1893, when she earned only 12 guineas during a year (1895) in which the total outlay for readers was £110 6s 6d. Overheads aside from salaries amounted to £2,752 16s 9d, for a total of £5,149 9d (see Appendix, Table 9). The Summary Ledger shows a credit to the publishing account for 1890 for 'By Sundries' of £43,073. If that figure reflects 1890 book sales, then the overhead is about 12% of sales. Weedon quotes John Murray in 1908 as estimating his overhead as a percent of turnover was 16.6% while Stanley Unwin calculated his 1925 cost as a percentage of total book cost at 16% (*Victorian Publishing* 63). As noted earlier, Smith, Elder tried to apportion a percentage of their general advertising to Gissing's titles but apportioning overhead as a simple percentage charged against each title would only distort the title's (and author's) own profitability. The Society's argument that expenses were a given for both author and publisher and should be counted against overall income seems justified, in part because it would assume that inefficient publishers would be justified in charging their

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<sup>78</sup> Gettmann (241) believes that she stopped publishing with Bentley after 1892 when a novel that was to have been in two volumes came up short and he had to issue it at 12s instead of 21s.

inefficiencies against authors' payments. Overheads, like the rooms Gissing rented at 2s 6d to 6s a week in 1892-1893 to escape the squabbles and 'domestic misery and discomfort' at home, were items that were best taken as a given and deducted from overall profits. As the rooms he rented did not figure in his own 'Account of Books' as a debit, publishers would be wrong to charge a percentage against each of their titles.<sup>79</sup>

One problem with the Society's models was that all of their projections were based on the assumption that the whole edition would be sold and that there would be no losses. The reality for Gissing, and probably for most authors, was that only part of a three-volume edition would sell and as many as 10% of the copies would be given away as copyright, author and review copies. While a cheap edition might sell thousands of copies, it did so over a period of years, often with a loss on the production costs of the first printings of the new editions. There was another issue with the reality of slow sales that the Society did not address, namely the offer of extra payments or higher royalties if the sale of an edition reached a certain number. Gissing experienced this in his contracts for *The Emancipated* and *Thyrza*. While the publisher was trying to be fair in rewarding an author whose novel became a best seller the likelihood of a Gissing or any new or modestly received author selling over 750 copies of a novel to the circulating libraries was remote. The offer of an extra payment may have been more of an

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<sup>79</sup> At the end of 1892, troubled at home by a new baby and his wife's fighting with the servants, Gissing finally rented a room for 6 shillings (fire extra) in another house where he could write in peace, writing in his diary for 31 December 1892 that the year was 'on the whole profitless. Marked by domestic misery and discomfort. The one piece of work, "The Odd Women", scribbled in 6 weeks as the autumn drew to an end, and I have no high opinion of it. Have read next to nothing; classical studies utterly neglected. With my plan of having a study away from the wretched home, may hope to achieve more in year to come' (Gissing, London292-293). The new study allowed him to concentrate on his writing and his diary from January until the end of April shows fairly steady work. From then until July he and his family were on holiday and then back to Exeter to prepare for their move to Brixton. Gissing went on ahead of the move and it was not until 10 July that he began to walk around Camberwell and thought of titling his next book 'Miss Lord of Camberwell', and started to work on it at the British Museum from 14 July, taking a 'bare attic' with a table and chair in Kennington for 3 shillings week. It proved to be far too hot in August so on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September he moved to another unfurnished room in Camberwell for 2s 6d a week (Gissing, London314). By 27 October he decided that he needed a week's holiday and that the Camberwell room was 'too squalid' and he would return to working from home, returning to work on the novel on 6 November (Gissing, London319-320)

enticement for the author to sign than a realistic expectation of sales. Still, Bentley did print 1,000 copies of *The Emancipated*, so he must have considered that such was possible. Smith, Elder were more realistic in only printing 500 of *Thyrza*, with the contract calling for additional payments only on a second edition, i.e., printing. The question in this case is one of a possible disincentive for a publisher to continue to push sales as the trigger number was approached. Had there been such a clause in the contract for *New Grub Street*, would Smith, Elder have pushed the sales beyond the initial 500 copies? It cost them only £24 11s 9d to print the additional 250 copies, but had they followed the model of *Thyrza* it would have cost them an additional £50 to pay Gissing.

William Heinemann, in his 1892 *Athenaeum* article on the 'Hardships of Publishing' saw the Society of Authors as a threat and called for a publishers' union to counter the 'unions' of authors, printers, binders, papermakers, booksellers, and circulating libraries, a union he would eventually create in founding the Publishers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland in 1896. 'Hardship' may have not been an accurate description of the conditions of publishing at the end of 1892 as the very existence of Heinemann is a good indication that conditions were not so difficult as to discourage others to enter the industry. Heinemann's own firm started in 1890, bracketed by the appearance of two other important new firms, Methuen in 1889 and Lawrence and Bullen in 1891. Within a year of starting his firm, Heinemann had his first best seller in Hall Caine's *The Bondman*, purchased for £300, and by 1892 had over 100 titles on his list (*Dictionary of Literary Biography*). Despite his success, Heinemann saw British publishing facing four hardships: the failure of the American copyright bill to boost income, deteriorating sales to the colonies, wage increases by book workers and authors, and increasing discounts to booksellers and libraries. Except for the increased wages to book workers, Heinemann's statements seem to contradict what we have seen



happen during the 1890s. Heinemann saw publishers under such pressure from increased wages that 'it has become imperative to employ non-union houses for work of an inferior order', meaning fiction. It is interesting to note that he does distinguish between fiction and 'the best work' and that he estimates that 75 per cent of books are printed in small editions. Non-fiction could involve complicated text layout, tables, and illustrations, raising the cost to the publisher. Compositors and printers did enjoy a 2-shilling-a-week wage increase in 1891 and Bentley's summary ledger shows an increase of 1 to 2 shillings for his compositors and printers between 1888 and 1891.<sup>80</sup> There is not enough data to be able to say that authors were better paid overall, but Heinemann could attribute some of the increased value of authors to his own aggressive pursuit of them, adding Henry James, Rudyard Kipling, H.G. Wells, E.F. Benson, George Moore, Robert Louis Stevenson, and others to his list. Heinemann was not afraid to spend money to get what he wanted: he was the only publisher who seemed willing to pay Bullen's £500 asking price for Gissing's *Lawrence* and Bullen titles.

Heinemann contended that the American copyright act, 'for which some of us hoped so much' had done little to improve profits. Yet the Act did much to improve returns or at least bring a payment instead of a piracy. Not only were British works now secure, but also British publishers and authors were now earning far more than token sums for the right to reprint their works in America. Although Maria Corelli complained that what she received from American publishers for *Wormwood* and the *Soul of Lilit* was only an 'honorary' in comparison with the sales of novels, Bentley had been unable to protect any of her earlier novels from piracy (*My First Book* 216). Best selling novels that would have been worthless before 1891 in terms of the American rights now brought small fortunes to their publishers and authors: Mrs Humphrey Ward's *History of*

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<sup>80</sup> There had been a 15% increase of 2 shillings a week on their 36s minimum salary in the wages of compositors and printers that had occurred in March 1891 (Stow; Levi 98)

*David Grieve* brought Smith, Elder £7,000 from Macmillan's purchase of American and Canadian rights. A sale of 18,000 copies of the novel in a colonial edition, at 4d a copy royalty, brought Mrs Ward £300 (Nowell-Smith 76, 102). Gissing's later novels brought him (less Colles' commission) £40 for his non-fiction work, *Charles Dickens* and £90 for *The Town Traveller* in 1898. His first American rights payment in 1892 was small, £6 11s 9d, received as share on the 10% payment on the cover price of *Denzil Quarrier* that Macmillan in New York negotiated with Lawrence and Bullen. The American payment was half of what he received for the continental rights. Heinemann may have been right in that higher profits may have been a point of dispute, as British publishers now had to compete for authors with American publishers (Nowell-Smith 75), driving up the cost of copyrights or advances. As in Gissing's case, the opening of the American market may have also helped to convince authors to hire agents to negotiate foreign rights sales, and negotiate them independently of their British publishers. Gissing wrote at the start of 1891 to Algernon that 'everyone seems to speak [of the American copyright act] as if it would very little benefit the mediocre English author' because the costs of rights would make them favour only novelists with a large sale. (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV 258-259). Time would prove him wrong, when he began receiving £50 and £100 for American rights sales in 1898.

Heinemann's second point, declining colonial sales, is debatable. There was a depression in Australia from 1890 to 1893 that affected book sales and contributed to Petherick's 1894 bankruptcy, but even so, British and Irish book exports were still strong. In terms of value the British and Irish printed book exports market fluctuated. The *Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom in Each of the Last Fifteen Years from 1885 to 1899* reported them standing at £1,143,509 in 1885, increasing to £1,388,600 in 1891, declining to £1,218,325 in 1894, and rising again in 1899 to £1,444,425, a 26% increase over 1885 (106-107). The colonial market, as Heinemann noted (150) was only

interested in cheap books but this was because English books were too dear for colonials, the three-volume library edition being unique to England. The one-volume novel, sold in sheets to Petherick or other colonial publishers at a shilling a quire, as Smith, Elder did, covered much of the cost of printing the cheap edition in one sale. Smith, Elder's sales of quires of *Thyrza* to Petherick covered half the cost of the cheap edition. Their sales of 1,500 copies of *The Nether World* to him in 1889 paid back the £25 cost of composing the four-page introduction for the Colonial edition and the paper and printing costs of the 1,500 copies, while the balance of £75 paid for the costs of the composing and printing the British edition. The cheap market did not keep Heinemann out of it. Nowell-Smith (100-101) notes that he was a strong competitor to Macmillan in that market and reproduces a page from Heinemann's Colonial Library of Popular Fiction catalogue for 1896 with 22 titles listed, including two by Adeline Sergeant, three by Zangwill, Wells' *Island of Dr. Moreau*, and other best sellers. Heinemann's complaint that publishers must employ higher-cost workers because business was more complex, with serial sales, colonial sales, translations, and the disappearance of the 'casual ten-pound note' from America reflects the increase in volume that the expanding English-language market was bringing to British publishing.

Because booksellers were competing on prices, publishers were forced to increase their discounts 'in some instances to 50 per cent', discounts that would 'land us all in the workhouse' if publishers did not make a 'timely and united stand' against it (Heinemann, *Hardships* 153). There is little if any evidence of increases in discounts over the period. Smith, Elder held his price for *Mudie* at a constant 15 shillings, 13 as 12 and his trade price varied depending on the quantity purchased by the booksellers.

In *The Pen and the Book*, Besant warned that 'the best books ever written ... may prove of no commercial value whatever' and estimated that at the end of the century

there were 1,300 working novelists, defining them as authors whose works were to be found in the circulating libraries, and of those no more than a dozen could equal the income of a successful physician or lawyer. He estimated that 60 or 70 English and American novelists earned a four-figure income, 250 made £400 or more (Gissing's range in 1899), another 200 who made between £100 to £400 (Gissing's range in 1896-1897 and again in 1900) and the rest made 'little or nothing' (143). Aiming to please an elite of readers brought Gissing only a modest income, an income that averaged just under £250 over his career, but saw some years earning barely £100 (1887-1888, 1897) and others earning over £700 (1901). He did not live long enough or earn enough by his writing to provide an estate for his family, leaving his children to be provided for, in the end, by the Civil List, but while he was alive he earned a modest, middle-class income. Looking at what his contemporaries in publishing were paid can put Gissing's payment into perspective. In 1890, the year Gissing was paid £150 for *The Emancipated*, Benjamin Cousens, Bentley's accountant and auditor was paid £16 13s 4d a month, £200 for the year, an amount that had remained unchanged for a decade. These were, of course, all full-time jobs exercising a great deal of responsibility. A copyright payment of £150 was more than most people employed in publishing could expect for a year's work, sitting behind their desks for 12 hour days, five and a half days a week. Gissing earned his £150 for far fewer hours of work. Moreover, his days were still his own and he had the leisure to go abroad when he had earned enough from a novel to afford the journey. Granted, this was a free-lance and uncertain life, with an income that was not guaranteed to remain stable from year-to-year or even month-to-month.

Several of Gissing's other contemporaries earned living wages as society secretaries or publishers' readers while still writing. Walter Besant earned £200 as Secretary of the Palestine Exploration Fund, with a rise to £300 towards the end of his 18 years in the position. The first Secretary of the Society of Authors was paid £100 a

year. In 1860, George Meredith became a staff member of the *Ipswich Journal* and for the next 8 years earned about £200 a year. In the same year he also became a Reader for Chapman and Hall, replacing John Forster, while also supplementing his income by reading to an elderly lady. His journalistic and reading duties only required his attendance in London one day a week and for a time he rented a bedroom in a house in Cheyne Walk, living with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, his brother William, and Algernon Swinburne. In 1864 he offered to spend three afternoons a week at Chapman's (Priestley 21-23; Lindsay 133, 394). At dinner in January 1896 at the Savile Club with Shorter, Clodd and others, Gissing learned that Meredith had an annual income of £150 a year as a reader for Chapman, and, if the gossip could be believed, John Morley, Macmillan's reader, had an annual income of £1,000 (Gissing, *London* 400).

The £150 payment for his copyright for *The Emancipated* may not have seemed much to Gissing, but it was more than a year's salary for many people. It was also not out of line with payments Bentley was making to his other authors at the time. The Bentley Summary Ledger for 1889 records the payment on 1 October to Gissing for £150, along with a total of £1,118 6s 4d to authors for that month (Summary Ledger 8). The total paid for the year was £5,888 1s 4d. In 1890 the total author payments went up to £6,834 13s 6d. Few authors were paid large sums. Among the October 1889 payments, T.A. Trollope, Anthony's brother, received £125 (the third volume of his memoirs, *What I Remember*, was published that year) and Rhoda Broughton, £400 (her novel, *Alas!*, was published in 1890). Looking through the Summary Ledger for 1890 and excluding the odd amounts that would be copyright payments, there are only five payments over £200, with Fanny Kemble and Rhoda Broughton leading the list at 300 guineas and £400 respectively, one payment to Marie Corelli for £175, three other payments to authors for £150, five ranging between £100 and £150, 19 for £50 and the rest for £40 or less. Miss Sergeant, mentioned earlier, was a prodigious writer,

producing 62 books between 1887 and 1900, with 14 following between 1901 and 1904 and 14 more published after her death in 1904. Her *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry records that she often had a yearly income of £1,000, although a Bentley ledger entry in 1890 shows a payment to her of only £50 and her probate records show an estate of only £294. The composers referred to by Sprigge were earning a minimum of 36s a week, increased to 38s or an average of £103 14s annually and this for a 54-hour week (9.5 hours weekdays and six hours on Saturdays). The printing house proofreaders made just over £138 annually, pressmen £84 (Levi 97-98). Conan Doyle's income as a physician in Southsea was about £300 a year, far less than the exceptional income he would later make as an author (Peter McDonald, *British* 141). Perhaps the best indication of what income it took to live with some degree of happiness comes from Gissing's outline of Ryecroft in 1900: 'I imagine an author who had led a long Grub Street life, & who, at the age of 50, is blest with a legacy which gives him £300 a year. Forthwith he goes down into Somerset, establishes himself in a cottage, & passes the last five years of his life in wonderful calm & contentment.' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 92).

Grant Allen's novel *Philistra* (1884), written under the pseudonym Cecil Power, is somewhat in the line of Gissing's novels in that it deals with writers, with Socialism, and with educated men who marry working class women. Although it was his first novel, Allen had an established career as a journalist and was paid £250 for the work by Chatto, providing that he made the ending a happy one, a change Allen was willing to make in return for the cheque. He told friends, most likely jokingly, that he was 'learning to do the sensational things that please the editors. I am trying with each new novel to go a step lower to catch the market... I have very little doubt that by carefully following the rules given me by Payn and other, and by feeling the public pulse, I shall in time succeed in being a fairly well-read average novelist' (Morton 87). Allen was able

to secure a far better than average living as a writer, but only by writing constantly for journals, by turning out novels and scientific works, and finally by having a best-seller in *The Woman Who Did*. While Gissing could turn out short stories in short order, he preferred spending time crafting his novels. And, like Allen, his health was bad and increasingly incapacitating him at a time when he was beginning to achieve some fame and adopt a less pessimistic and more popular style.

Joseph Conrad's early years were also short of financial reward. Peter Keating quotes David S. Meldrum, Blackwood's literary advisor, advising him on Conrad:

It surprises me that he can get along at all. His long story costs two years' work. He *may* get £400 out of it, not more. And we see what he does besides his long story – two or three short ones each year, bringing in at most £100. That means his total income from his work doesn't exceed £300... I think it very splendid of him to refuse to do any pot-boiling and hope, for him and for ourselves too, that it will pay for him in the long run. (Keating 67).

Henry James also had small audience for his books, earning far more in England for his serial rights than for his volume rights. Converting Anesko's table of British earnings for James from 1880 to 1904 from dollars into sterling shows James' earning an average of £176 annually for volume sales and £134 for English serials in the period, resulting in an annual average of £310. Like Gissing, James (who lived entirely on his literary earnings until 1893), would complain that despite his success in England and in America his literary reputation brought with it a 'pecuniary equivalent almost grotesquely small' (Anesko 176; 79; 48).

For best-selling authors with a popular market, the workload may have been the same but the rewards were far greater. The Bentley 'Author's Ledger' and 'Temple Bar Author's Ledger' (British Library Ad. MS 46562) that records Bentley's payments to Gissing for the unpublished *Mrs Grundy's Enemies* and *The Emancipated* (286) has on page 3 of that volume three accounts (there are several in this volume) for Marie Corelli (1855–1924), with a pasted-in clipping from the *Sunday Sun* for 27 March 1892:

We alluded in this column last week to the average smallness of author's incomes when they fail to entirely attract the public. When they succeed, things are very different. Miss Marie Corelli, for example, draws on her royalties on her previous books an income of over £1,000 a year, and this income is steadily increasing; while for her new romance she has received £1,000 for one year's rights only. Had she been willing to sell the copyright out and out, she would have had £5,000 in England and an average sum in America, thus running Mrs. Humphrey Ward very close in the race. Mrs. Ward has sold her copyrights, but Marie Corelli prefers to retain hers, all of them representing a large capital, on which the interest almost doubles itself every six months.

The ledger shows Corelli's royalty payments for 1892-3 totalling £855 6s and for 1893-4 £939 7s. The December 1892 accounts, for example, show her earning a royalty of £71 4s for *Two Worlds*, and £32 4 for March 1893. In June 1893 she earned £25 5s more on it, in September £43 2s.; December £72 17; and in March 1894, £37 17. Her 1895-96 royalties totalled £757 8s; reaping £49 10s alone on *Wormwood*, an infamous novel on the evils of absinthe. Corelli left an estate of over £24,000. Her fellow best-selling novelist, Ouida (1839–1908), who earned an average of £5,000 a year at the top of her career, was less fortunate, dying penniless and pitied in Italy, her novels preceding her.<sup>81</sup>

Purchasing a novel was a luxury of the wealthy few in Scott's day but had become an important entertainment commodity by the end of the century, eclipsing poetry and selling in serial as well as volume form. How to judge the value of this commodity? Browning's *The Ring and the Book* took over 12 years to sell its 3,000 copy first edition (1869-1882; Erickson, 'Market') while Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* sold 20,000 copies within three months of its publication in 1895 (Purdy 91). Books had become a commodity and had a commodity value based on the market. There was a commerce of literature well before the end of the Victorian era and we need to understand that

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<sup>81</sup> Ouida was given a Civil List pension of £150 in 1906. See Katherine Mullin, 'Mackay, Mary [Marie Corelli] (1855–1924)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34742, accessed 13 Feb 2007] and Helen Killoran, 'Ramée, Marie Louise de la [Ouida] (1839–1908)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32772, accessed 13 Feb 2007]. Gissing referred to her as 'poor old Ouida' in 1900 (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 70).



commerce and its interaction with popular culture, i.e., the demands of a mass market and how that affected what raw materials (manuscripts) publishers bought, what authors wrote in response to that market – and Gissing was no exception, although he pandered less than most – and how the interaction of these three actors, publisher, author, and market, influenced what was published, what was bought, and what was written. Consider the order postulated: publisher, market, and author. If this were a coiled serpent, which is the head? Is there a head? A publisher with a new series could create a new market. So would a change of public tastes or a novelist with a new voice. The end result was an item with a price, the price high enough to pay for production and leave a profit for the publisher and low enough to attract buyers. One credit never given to the publishers by the Society of Authors is that publishers are a patient lot. They were willing to take a calculated risk on a book, knowing that even if they did lose money on the first edition they could make money over all the years of the copyright. Authors with less capital and fewer sources of income had less patience. They had to look for copyright sales or advances sufficient to cover their immediate living costs until their next sale.

Where was Art? Art was not a consideration for Payn and probably not for Besant, Allen, and the avowedly popular novelists of the day. It may have been a consideration for Hardy and Meredith and Moore and James, as well as Gissing, and even though their financial affairs were less pressing than his, they were also keen to secure a good sale as well as a good review. The writers who wrote for the market were writing to a time, a formula, and an audience that would pass. Their novels became as dated as any other fashion and they did not survive their time. The novels of Gissing, James, and Hardy did survive, although Gissing may be less well known today than either of the other two. His novels are harder to find than theirs, with only *New Grub Street* and *The Odd Women* consistently remaining in print, along with his travel essay, *By*

*the Ionian Sea*. Even today he has a small market of readers, but a sufficient one to keep some of his books in print and on the backlists of major publishers.

One issue not touched on in this thesis is Victorian censorship. It may be that looking back at the Victorians we make more of it than they did. The Victorians were a religious people, with a middle class that was conservative in their morals and far less accepting of behaviours that were more acceptable among the working class. Mudie catered to the middle class – only they could afford his subscription rates and he was very much a part of the stern Evangelism that Gissing rejected. It was a conservatism that saw Vizetelly off to prison for translating and publishing Zola, that decried Realism as glorifying filth but that in the end had little effect on Gissing, beyond the loss of one novel, a loss that he accepted. *Mrs Grundy's Enemies*, purchased by Bentley, was revised over a period of years at Bentley's request both by Gissing and by one of Bentley's editors, but never published. Perhaps it is another instance of literature becoming a commodity, one that could be used or discarded. *Mrs Grundy's Enemies* was not covered in detail in this thesis, its history being so well done in Gettmann's book, but its loss is a loss to all of us as it would have given us an insight into Gissing's views on the moral rectitude of the age and the influence Mrs Grundy (and her embodiment in Mudie) had on literature. How much Grundyism stifled literature would be a topic for a separate work. In Gissing's case he lost *Mrs Grundy's Enemies* but saw *The Unclassed* published, even though Bentley turned it down because of its prostitute heroine. Gissing was surprised but accepting of the condemnation *The Unclassed* received, not only from critics outside but also from friends like Frederic Harrison (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 230). The reviews compared the novel to Zola's works but found that, as an English novel, it had 'nothing that will give offence, and much that will repay perusal' (Coustillas and Partridge 66). The book was even championed by Gladstone in May 1888 issue of *The Nineteenth Century* (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 14). The fact that Mudie did take *The*

*Unclassed* and list it in his catalogue, even if some branches of Mudie's refused to circulate it, indicates some of the ambivalence the Victorians had towards literature, and especially towards novels in which sin was not condemned and punished. In declining to publish it Bentley argued that it would encourage the young to believe that 'a life of vice can be lived without loss of purity...' something that Bentley felt Bulwer-Lytton's *Alice or the Mysteries* (1838) had done much earlier, creating 'much mischief ...among the young of both sexes' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 189). The strictures did not extend to all circulating libraries as a friend of Harrison's had borrowed it *The Unclassed* from a library in Belgravia and was told there was a special request not to keep it more than five days (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 242). As George Moore noted in *Literature at Nurse, or, Circulating Morals* (1885), there was nothing in his novels, *A Modern Lover* or *A Mummer's Wife* that was more offensive than what could be found in many other popular novels. Gissing came to Moore's defence, writing in the *Pall Mall Gazette* ('Correspondence: The New Censorship of Literature'. XL, 15 December 1884, 2) to agree with Moore's concern about censorship but saying that the blame should not be put entirely on Mudie. The "tradesman" Moore's term for Mudie, and a term Milvain applied to the modern author in *New Grub Street*) must cater to the tastes of the public and abolishing the library system or introducing cheap first editions will not make a change, so long as authors also look at their own profit and loss and write for the prevailing trade. Gissing condemned Thackeray for writing to conciliate Mrs Grundy and thought writers should write the novels they wanted to write and public taste would change, as it did. When Gissing wrote the preface to the 1895 edition of *The Unclassed* he noted that the theme would only arouse a 'flying smile' instead of the fear it had caused in 1884 (Coustillas and Partridge 74).

Although the Victorians would have called Gissing's topics base and unsavoury; and although his life with Nell and with Gabrielle and his rejection of religion put him

outside the norms of middle-class Victorian life, he was by no means a radical. In a letter to Algernon on 27 July 1885 he wrote that he would support Moore's attack on Mudie if it is 'well done'.

But I feel that there is a strain of vulgarity in him; I did not like his article sometime ago in the P.M.G. Do you remember—'A hansom soon took me to so & so's place of business.' That gives me a shudder. His 'Modern Lover' is unspeakable trash. I have not read 'A Mummer's Wife.' Well, I suppose I am out of that kind of literature (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 322-23).

After reading *Literature as Nurse* Gissing decided he would not read any more Moore, as 'His mind is hopelessly crude' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* II, 328).

In the Introduction to the 1976 Harvester Press edition of *Literature as Nurse*, Coustillas writes: 'Where the novel is concerned the mode of publication or distribution has a notable effect, not only on its sale, but also on its content, if the writer seeks to satisfy the demands of the market' (9-10). Mudie took only 50 copies of *A Modern Lover*, restricting access to it after the complaints of 'two ladies from the country' about a nude scene in it and refused *A Mummer's Wife*. W.H. Smith had also refused to take *Esther Waters* because it featured an unmarried mother. The circulating libraries were reticent to take novels that would not appeal to their mostly female, middle-class readers and that might cause offence if found in the home by young ladies. Journals that published fiction had similar scruples, often more so than the libraries. The publishing history of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* shows the extent that Hardy was willing to revise for what he saw as two separate markets, the serial market and the trade book market. The latter was freer, where it could be assumed an adult was exercising a right to purchase and read material that he found suitable for his own home, away from the constraints the libraries and family periodicals felt themselves under (Law 2000, 191-197). Except for *Mrs Grundy's Enemies*, none of the novels referenced above were suppressed. They may have been restricted in Mudie's and Mudie's restrictions would carry weight with publishers, but there was a market for them outside of Mudie and authors and

publishers realized that as well. Bentley did not destroy the manuscript but continued to try to sell *Mrs Grundy's Enemies* to other publishers, approaching Chatto and Windus with it in 1887 (Coustillas, *George Gissing* 571). Had the manuscript not been lost after the dissolution of Bentley in 1898 it may have found a publisher as Gissing attained more popularity and in the end I think it was popularity within the particular ethos of a market that determined sales and success, rather than the smiles or frowns of Mudie.

Although Gissing's obituary in *The Times* (written by Harold Child) noted that he 'valued his artistic conscience above popularity, and his purpose above his immediate reward' (*Times* 29 December 1903; 4), Gissing knew of and wrote about the lack of money. In *New Grub Street*, there are 478 references to money in its text, many chapters having 15 or more references to pounds, guineas, shillings, pence, earnings, payment or money. In a letter to Bertz in 1891 Gissing found the increasing output of books distressing, and that 'but for the money, I should cease producing altogether' (Gissing, *Collected Letters* IV, 343). Gissing was acutely aware of financial reward, seeing it in part as society's reward for hard work and integrity. In his diary for the end of 1894, he concludes the year in a manner reminiscent of Pepys: 'Find that I earned by literature in 1894 no less a sum than £453-12-5. Bravo! I see that my total expenses were £239-6-9.' (Gissing, *London* 358). He knew too well that he would never have that reward, or popularity. It was the nature of literature and its ultimately commercial nature that dictated that only the popular would be rewarded financially because that reward could only come from the sales of thousands of copies, expensive or cheap, to willing buyers. Authors with an audience could demand a price. Authors with only a small and elite audience had little leverage and could only accept what a publisher could offer and hope that the publisher would at least be honest in his dealings. Much as Lawrence and Bullen respected Gissing, and much as they were proud to publish him even if they lost money, they could offer little more than they did. Much as Methuen wanted Gissing for

his list, he could not offer Lawrence and Bullen more than the sales of Gissing's novels would allow. Artistry, integrity, and conscience could survive in the commerce of literature, it could reward its authors with perhaps a better-than-average living, but not always with wealth. Gissing's life was hard, and too short. His greatest reward is that his novels are still being read, still being discussed, and still revealing to new generations something about men, women, and the effects money and the material world has on them.

## Conclusion

Although much has been written about Dickens, Thackeray, and others in the period up to 1870, there has been less work done on the publishing history of later Victorian novelists whose literary reputations have survived and who wrote after 1880, when the publishing market began to change and transform itself into recognizable modern publishing. George Gissing lived during this age and his publishing career provides a case study of the changes that occurred. The rise of the mass reading market after 1870 is documented by Jonathan Rose and elsewhere, the rise of the literary agent by Hepburn, copyright by Nowell-Smith, the circulating library by Griest, Bentley and Gissing's encounter with late Victorian censorship by Gettmann, but this thesis has attempted to pull all of these pieces into one document that shows the impact all these changes had on the life of one author and in so doing, helps to put the age into focus. Although Gissing called Milvain a 'Man of His Day' there is enough professional overlap in their careers, at least in so far as Gissing realized that he had to be aware of the economics of publishing sufficiently to continue to make a living while not compromising his artistic goals.

Gissing's relationship with Smith, Elder provides a view of publishing on the cusp of change from mid-Victorian to modern, during the key years from 1886 to 1891. I believe that Gissing purposely set New Grub Street in the 1881 to reflect the earlier age when he was learning his craft and before the radical change that was to come in the 1890s, not only in publishing itself but also in Gissing's more mature and more professional approach to authorship. The contrast between Milvain, the 'Man of his Day' and Reardon, who works as if he were still in the Grub Street of old, reflects Gissing's earlier professional life and the one he was contemplating moving into. Although Gissing had completed New Grub Street by January 1891 and did not

mention seeing A.P. Watt's prospectus until April 1891, the knowledge that Milvain had about contemporary publishing was certainly the same that Gissing had, even though Gissing may have disdained Milvain's commercialism. Gissing was aware, painfully aware, as he would write to Payn in August 1891 that 'only with the help of money' could he develop his artistic powers. Gissing's inability to negotiate successfully with Payn for *Born in Exile* drove him to seek professional help from literary agents, who would help him secure the 'odds and ends of profit' which he had 'perforce' neglected (See Gissing's letter to Payn in Chapter 2). Those 'odds and ends' were domestic serialisation, syndication, and American and colonial sales, any of which Gissing could have retained for himself but was unable to do so without the contacts, the negotiating knowledge and skills, or the time and temperament. Gissing's agents were able to secure some of those 'odds and ends' for him, handle his affairs in England when he left for France, and continue to serve his estate after his death. Although publishers may have missed the earlier and simpler days of authors and publishers working as partners, with only a handshake between them, those days were ending by the middle of the 1880s. By the 1890s most professional authors seem to have employed Watt, Colles, Pinker or some other agent to look after their interests. The stakes were too high and markets too complex for them to do otherwise.

The evolving form of the contract shown in Chapter 4 demonstrates the increasing complexity of publishing. From a simple letter, handshake, or receipt, the financial agreement between author and publisher became a formal contract that specified sales rights abroad, other rights, royalty fees, and term limits. The new forms of contracts clearly show the difference between the publishing conditions of the early 1880s, much unchanged from 50 years previously, to the contracts of the 1890s: modern documents, drawn up by agents and lawyers. Business agreements had replaced gentlemen's agreements. This reflected not only the growing complexity of the market



but also the growing professionalism of authorship. The market was also becoming more sophisticated in its marketing, with novels being commissioned for serialisation in magazines or in publisher's series, and marketed as much as a commodity as a literary work. Copyright sales and half-profit agreements, dominant in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, gave way to the modern system of advances and royalties.

Until 1894 the three-volume novel and the circulating library dominated novel production. There has been much misunderstanding of the economics of the three-volume novel and chapter 5 attempts to demonstrate that it was not always risk-free for publishers or supportive of young novelists. It was preferred by the circulating libraries not because they could circulate more copies but because it forced subscribers to take out a more expensive subscription. Finally, the growth of a mass-market for novels and a doubling of their production ultimately made it too expensive even for the circulating libraries.

The three-volume novel influenced the way Gissing wrote and may have capped his income. There is not enough data in Gissing's case to prove the point, but it may be that he was offered higher prices for his books after the end of the three-decker because publishers' costs were lower and they were more likely to recoup their advance within the first three years of publication. The six-shilling novel may have still proved unprofitable but the cheap editions should have returned enough to off-set the advance, with royalties in future years a minimal expense.

Serial and periodical publication was a valuable source of income for Gissing but one that he did not fully exploit. As noted, he preferred not to submit novels for serialisation by Tillotsons. Given the northern setting of his novels and his Yorkshire origins, Tillotson's northern focus, and the sale of *Demos* for serialisation by the Manchester, novels such as *The Emancipated* would have found an interested audience.

There was also a demand for his works in translation and in American and colonial reprints. Gissing was not able to take advantage of some opportunities because Smith, Elder had the entire rights to some of his most popular novels, but Gissing himself was reluctant to write more short stories or take on other writing that would distract him from his novels.

Pierre Coustillas, in 'Aspects of the Late Victorian Publishing Scene: George Gissing and his Publishers', recounts Gissing telling one of Frederic Harrison's sons, who was thinking of becoming a novelist, that he should 'Far better be a crossing-sweeper. My writing brings me next to nothing [] It is a terrible and preposterous world, & writing is a terrible profession' (Coustillas, 'Aspects' 3). The 'crossing-sweeper' analogy is interesting as Grant Allen, equally facetiously, advised young authors to buy a broom and stake out a street corner instead. But in contrast to Gissing, Grant Allen did make his 'thousand a year' and he made it by hard work, writing incessantly and placing articles, essays, stories, and novels anywhere he could. Gissing would not and perhaps could not do that. Coustillas also refers to a passage in the *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (Autumn XXII) in which Gissing contrasts himself with Trollope and Dickens and compares himself, indirectly, with Charlotte Brontë':

Who knows better than I that your representative author face to face with your representative publisher was, is, and ever will be, at a ludicrous disadvantage? And there is no reason in the nature and the decency of things why this wrong should not by some contrivance be remedied. A big, blustering, genial brute of a Trollope could very fairly hold his own, and exact at all events an acceptable share in the profits of his work. A shrewd and vigorous man of business such as Dickens, aided by a lawyer who was his devoted friend, could do even better, and, in reaping sometimes more than his publisher, redress the ancient injustice.

But pray, what of Charlotte Brontë? Think of that grey, pinched life, the latter years of which would have been so brightened had Charlotte Brontë received but, let us say, one third of what, in the same space of time, the publisher gained by her books (Gissing, *Private Papers* 181)

That ‘grey, pinched life’ that he shared with Smith, Elder’s earlier author was his lot, and the lot of many, if not most authors of his day. Few would have the sales of a Charlotte Brontë, or even that of a George Gissing. Brontë certainly was not financially rewarded to the extent that the sales of her novels deserved, although Smith did make additional payments to her. Publishers paid authors what they could, and often as little as they could, but an author’s earnings were ultimately dependent on his or her sales. Gissing’s earnings were poor, but they were the earnings of a middle-class professional or academic and reflected his sales. He did not write for a popular market, or for money, and understood, even if he did not always accept, that fact. Publishing was always a business and one subject to the whims of a popular market. As the nineteenth century ended, that market expanded, both within and outside of Britain. The new market needed writers to prepare the novels and serials that the public demanded. Some would reap great rewards, some would barely survive on their literary income, and most would be forgotten by history. Gissing would gain the posthumous respect that he knew he wrote for. His life also serves to illuminate the economic, contractual, and professional changes that occurred and that impacted the lives of Gissing and his colleagues at the end of the Victorian era.

## **Addendum**

### **Limitations and suggestions for further research**

This thesis has involved a case study of one author, one who I believe to be representative of his time and of other professional novelists who lived by their pen but whose rewards were in critical acceptance rather than financial success. This does, however, have the limitation of being the study of only one author. Were it to be expanded to include Hardy, Conrad, Meredith, and James, it could then provide a definitive economic history of authorship in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some areas would remain the same, namely the importance of international sales and the use of agents, while some would allow a contrast that would show what advantages the greater use of serialization brought to Hardy and James, for example, and James' extensive publishing in America as well as in Britain. Conrad's case involves a longer period: Richard Garnet's introduction to his *Letters from Joseph Conrad* tells us that it took nineteen years for Conrad to achieve any popular success, even though his reviews were favourable from the start. Conrad's *Almayer's Folly* (T. Fisher Unwin 1895) took seven years to go to a third impression, *Outcast of the Islands* (T. Fisher Unwin, 1896) and *Tales of Unrest* (T. Fisher Unwin, 1898) both took eleven years to reach a second impression, and the *Nigger of the Narcissus* (Heinemann, 1897) took sixteen years to reach its third impression (Conrad 16).

### **Colonial Publishing**

Although I did cite Paul Eggert's essay on the colonial market I did not go further into Gissing's Australian sales. This was an important market, with the sales to Petherick sufficient at least to cover some of Smith, Elder's production costs for printing the initial one-volume editions. For a history of Australian publishing, see M.

Lyons and J. Arnold, *A History of the Book in Australia 1891–1945* (University of Queensland Press, 2001).

### **Serpents and Circles**

On page 203 I mention that the interactions of publishers, authors, and markets influenced what was published, what was bought, and what was written and question which would be the head of the serpent and which the tale. This has some resemblance to Robert Darton's 'Communications Circuit', in which he also includes booksellers, printers, and all of the other actors involved in the writing, publication, and distribution of books and perhaps to Pierre Bourdieu's 'Field of Cultural Production'. My concern was with what inspired the creation of a work, rather than its location in the complex field of competing forces that Bourdieu outlines and that point of creation could occur at any point on my 'serpent'. In Gissing's case, the point of creation was usually his own, as autonomous author, but two of his novels, *Sleeping Fires* and *The Paying Guest* were written at the request of publishers. *Sleeping Fires* was written to order to fill a series that T. Fisher Unwin hoped would find a market among harried commuters looking for a quick read. Cassell imitated the T. Fisher Unwin Autonym Series in its Pocket Library Series, offering Gissing a very similar contract. The market could also be a beginning, not just an end, that is, reader demand for a particular style, or the public's desire to read about some event could inspire authors (or publishers) to fulfil that demand. This did not figure directly in Gissing's case, although *Demos* was written at a time where there was an interest in Socialism and Gissing hoped that the anti-war sentiments of the *Crown of Life* would attract readers opposed to the Boer War. Bourdieu's map of the 'Literary Field' in his 'Field of Cultural Production' (Finkelstein and McCleery, *The Book History Reader*, 82) locates Zola within the French literary field very much

were Gissing would be located within the English: appealing to an intellectual and limited audience, and on the 'poor' side of the economic scale.

## Appendix

Table 1: Gissing's Contracts

Type	Title
Shared Profits Remington, 1880)	<i>Workers in the Dawn: A Novel</i> (3 volumes, London:
Sale	<i>Mrs Grundy's Enemies</i> (Bentley, unpublished)

[printed form, using archaic swashed 's'. Handwritten items in italics.

An agreement made the *twenty-ninth* day of *December* One Thousand and eighty-two between *George Robert Gissing Esq of 17 Oakley Crescent, London SW* and Richard Bentley & Son, of 8 New Burlington St., in the City of Westminster, Publishers in Ordinary to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty.

The Said *Mr Gissing* having written a work at present entitled "*Now of Never*", which is understood to be equal in extent to *three volumes crown 8vo*, and being fully possessed of all legal rights in the said work prior to the signature of this agreement, hereby agrees to sell, and the said Richard Bentley & Son hereby agree to purchase, the *copyright of and in the said work for the sum of fifty guineas (£52.10.0.) payable upon the day that the work is published.*

### Memorandum.

*It is understood that no pecuniary responsibility arising from the publication of the work shall attach to Mr Gissing unless the work contains libellous matter.*

Witness the hands of the respective parties hereunto.

*George R. Gissing*  
*Richard Bentley & Son*

Witness to the signature of  
*Mr G.R. Gissing*  
*Algernon F. Gissing, Solr.*  
*49 Mornington Road N.W.*

Witness to the signature of  
Richard Bentley & Son  
H. Canssus (??)  
8 New Burlington st.

[at end, in red]

In the event of the Author being a Married Lady, this Agreement should be countersigned by her Husband.

Should any payment be contingent upon the sale of a stated number of Copies, it is understood that the sale of Surplus (or waste) Copies is not included in such number. The back of the Emancipated agreement has also in red other conditions as 'Notes or Conditions': The Author is entitled to six copies of the work – or a translator two – delivered upon publication free of charge in the United Kingdom.

When surplus stock or plates have remained on hand unsaleable for some time they will be sold off at "remainder price," pulped or melted, and the product credited to the account of the owners, according to the terms of the agreement.

A blank is left to charge for any corrections by the author after the ms arrives at the printers, if it exceeds xxxx pounds.

(Gissing agreements: British Library Add. Ms. 46620, f. 275)

**Lease and Royalty**      *The Unclassed: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Chapman & Hall, 1884; 1 volume, New York: Fenno, 1896)

**Sale**      *Demos: A Story of English Socialism* (3 volumes, London: Smith, Elder, 1886; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1886)

**Half-Profits**      *Isabel Clarendon* (2 volumes London: Chapman & Hall, 1886)

This agreement, made this third day of March 1886, between George Gissing of no. 7k Cornwall Residences, Regents Park, London NW hereinafter called "the Author" of the One Part, and the COMPANY, trading under the name of CHAPMAN & HALL, LIMITED, hereinafter called "the Publishers" of the Other Part.

It is agreed that the Publishers shall be the sole Publishers of every Edition of a Work written by the Author called "Isabel Clarendon" which they shall publish at their own expense and risk, during the Copyright in the said Work.

The Publishers will debit the Work with the Invoice amounts paid for Printing, Paper, Advertising, and Binding; and with Ten per Cent. on the sums expended to defray the cost of the establishment. It is however mutually agreed that the Publishers shall be permitted to retain as their exclusive profit the Trade Cash Discounts which they may be able to obtain on Printing, Paper, Advertisement, or Binding Account.

The Profits then remaining of every edition that may be printed of the Work shall be divided into two equal parts. One Moiety hereof shall be paid to the Author, and the other Moiety shall belong to the Publishers.

All Corrections necessitated by alterations made by the Author above Fifteen Shillings per sheet of 32 pages shall be paid by the Author.

Six copies of the Work to be supplied gratis to the Author and any Copies beyond at Trade Price.



Accounts shall be made up half-yearly at Midsummer and Christmas and delivered on or before October 1 and 1<sup>st</sup> April following, and settled by cheque as soon as conveniently may be after such date. The books to be accounted for at the Trade-Sale Price, thirteen as twelve. It shall, however, be open to the Publisher's judgment and discretion to dispose of Copies at a Lower Rate, or of the remainder at a Special Price. (New York Public Library)

**Edition Sale, Royalty**      *Thyrza: A Tale* (3 volumes, London: Smith, Elder, 1887)  
*Memorandum of Agreement made the fifteenth day of February 1887 between George Gissing Esq of 7K Cornwall Residences, Regents Park, London N.W. and Messrs Smith, Elder & Co. of 15 Waterloo Place, London, S.W.*

Mr George Gissing having written a novel entitled "Thyrza" hereby agrees to sell to Messrs. Smith Elder & Co. the right to print and publish the work on the following conditions.

I. Messrs. Smith Elder & Co are to pay to Mr Gissing the sum of fifty pounds (£50.0.0) on the publication of the work.

II. In the event of the first edition of the five hundred copies being exhausted, Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co are to pay Mr Gissing a Royalty of ten per cent. on the selling price of all copies sold beyond that number. (John Murray)

**Sale**      *A Life's Morning* (3 volumes, London: Smith, Elder, 1888; 1 volume, Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1888)

**Sale**      *The Emancipated* (3 volumes, London: Richard Bentley & Sons, 1889)

1889 Sept. 30  
George Gissing Esq  
And  
Richard Bentley & Son

"The Emancipated"

An Agreement made the *thirtieth* day of *September* One Thousand Eight Hundred and *Eighty Nine* between *George Gissing Esqr.* of *7 K. Cornwall Residences, Regent's Park, N.W.* and *Richard Bentley & Son*, of *8 New Burlington Street*, in the City of Westminster and County of London, Publishers in Ordinary to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty.

The said *Mr Gissing* having written a work at present entitled "*The Emancipated*," which is understood to be equal in extent to three volumes crown octavo, and being fully possessed of all legal rights in the said work prior to the signature of this agreement, hereby agrees to sell, and the said *Richard Bentley & Son* hereby agree to purchase, the *copyright of the said story for the sum of one hundred and fifty pounds (£150) payable upon the signature of this agreement.*

*It is understood, however, that should eight hundred and fifty (850) copies of the work be sold in 3 volume form, (other than as a "remainder") a further payment shall be made to Mr*

*Gissing of fifty pounds (£50) and likewise, should one thousand (1000) copies be sold in the same form a further payment of fifty pounds (£50) shall be made to Mr Gissing.*

Witness the hands of the respective parties hereunto.

Witness to the signature of

*George Gissing Esq*

Name *Morley Roberts*

Address *49 Redburn Ct Chelsea SW*

Witness to the Signature of

Richard Bentley & Son,

Name *Nathaniel T Bean*

Address *8 New Burlington St London W*

*George Gissing*

*Richard Bentley & Son.*

(Gissing agreements: British Library Add. Ms. 46623, f. 178)

**Sale**                    *The Nether World* (3 volumes, London: Smith, Elder, 1889; 1 volume, New York: Harper, 1889)

**Sale**                    *The Emancipated: A Novel* (3 volumes, London: Bentley, 1890; 1 volume, Chicago: Way & Williams, 1895)

**Sale**                    *New Grub Street* (3 volumes, London: Smith, Elder, 1891; 1 volume, Troy, N.Y.: Brewster, 1904)

**Advance**            *Denzil Quarrier: A Novel* (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1892; New York: Macmillan, 1892)

Agreement between Messrs. Lawrence & Bullen, Publishers 169 New Bond St London W. & [Mr erased] George Gissing, Esq. St Leonard's Terrace Exeter for the publication of a novel, Denzil Quarrier, written by [Mr erased] George Gissing, Esq.

This agreement touches only the edition of the work published for the United Kingdom for the sum of six-shillings, (thirteen copies to count as twelve)

I, Harry Walton Lawrence & I Arthur Henry Bullen, trading as Lawrence &

Bullen do hereby agree to publish for Mr George Gissing a novel Denzil Quarrier written by him, for which we agree to pay him a royalty of one shilling per copy for every copy sold in the United Kingdom – we also agree to pay him one hundred guineas (£105) on account of the aforesaid royalties which shall be payable on or before the publication of the work.. (New York Public Library)

**Sale**                    *Born in Exile: A Novel*, 3 volumes (London: Black, 1892)

**Advance**            *The Odd Women* (3 volumes, London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1893; 1 volume, New York: Macmillan, 1893)

We agree to publish for George Gissing, Esq., a novel in three volumes to be entitled "The Odd Women". The novel shall be issued in the spring of 1893. We will print 500 copies in the first instance; and the type shall be left standing for a reasonable period.

On the 3 vol. edition we will give Mr. Gissing a royalty of 3/ (three shillings) per copy, 13 copies counting as 12. Special terms will be arranged for export copies.

We agree to give Mr. Gissing half the profits derived from the American, Continental, and colonial sales.

The novel shall afterwards be issued in 1 vol. form at 3<sup>s</sup> 6<sup>d</sup>; and on this 3<sup>s</sup> 6<sup>d</sup> edition Mr. Gissing shall receive a royalty of 6<sup>d</sup> per copy (13 as 12) on all copies sold in the United Kingdom.

We have paid a sum of fifty guineas (£52.10) in earnest of the royalties; and shall pay another fifty guineas on the day of publication.

We undertake to deliver statements twice a year – in January and in July – for the half years ending June 30 and December 31 (New York Public Library).

This was later changed and an accounting on 31.12.94 shows a royalty of 4/ per copy on the 3v and 1/ on 6/, half profits on Colonial and Continental sales.

**Advance**      *In the Year of Jubilee* (3 volumes, London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1894; 1 volume, New York: Appleton, 1895)

Memorandum of Agreement made the first day of June 1894 between George Gissing, Esq of the one part and Messrs Lawrence & Bullen, 16 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, Publishers, of the other part.

Messrs Lawrence and Bullen agree to publish Mr George Gissing's novel *Nancy Lord of Camberwell* on the following terms:-

The work shall be published in the Autumn of 1894 in three volumes; the edition shall consist of 600 copies and the type shall be kept standing for a reasonable period.

Messrs Lawrence and Bullen shall pay a Royalty of four shillings per copy on every copy sold in the United Kingdom, 25 copies to be accounted for as 24.

Messrs Lawrence & Bullen shall pay half the profits arising from the American, Continental & Colonial sales.

The Novel shall afterwards be issued in 1 Volume at six-shillings, and Messrs Lawrence & Bullen shall pay a Royalty of one shilling per copy on each copy of this edition sold in the United Kingdom, 13 copies being accounted for as 12.

Messrs Lawrence & Bullen have paid fifty guineas on receipt of M.S. and agree to pay another fifty guineas on publication. The sums are paid in earnest of Royalties.

Accounts shall be rendered twice a year, in January & July (Lilly Library)

**Advance**      *Eve's Ransom* (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1895; New York: Appleton, 1895)

Memorandum of Agreement made the fifth day of February 1895 between George Gissing, Esq., of the one part and Mssrs. Lawrence & Bullen, 16 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, publishers, of the other part.

Messrs. Lawrence & Bullen agree to publish Mr. George Gissing's novel "Eves' Ransom" on the following terms:

- (1) The work shall be published early in April 1895 in 1 volume at the price of six-shillings.
- (2) Messrs. Lawrence & Bullen shall pay a royalty of one shilling per copy on every copy sold in the United Kingdom, 13 copies to be accounted for as 12.
- (3) Messrs. Lawrence & Bullen shall pay to Mr. Gissing half the profits arising from American, Continental, & Colonial sales.
- (4) Messrs. Lawrence & Bullen shall pay fifty guineas (£52.10), on account of royalties, on or before the date of publication.
- (5) Accounts shall be rendered twice a year in January & July. (New York Public Library)

**Sale**                    *Sleeping Fires* (London: Unwin, 1895; New York: Appleton, 1896)  
 Printed, no date on the body of the agreement, only on the centre fold, dated Jan 18<sup>th</sup> 1893. Written in is a guarantee that the work is original and before in print. The story is to consist of ‘about 30000 words complete in itself’. Para 4: ‘The Author hereby agrees to cede to the Publisher in consideration of the payment of £150 on receipt of complete manuscript, which shall be delivered not later than March 31<sup>st</sup> 1895, all his rights whatsoever in the above work, both serial and book rights in Great Britain and elsewhere.’ (New York Public Library)

**Sale**                    *The Paying Guest* (London: Cassell, 1895; New York: Dodd, Mead, 1895)  
 Memorandum.... 27<sup>th</sup> day of April 1895. ‘Author agrees to write for the publishers, subject to the approval of their Editor, a new and original story (under a title to be arranged) which is intended to form one of their Pocket Library Novel series edited by Mr. Max Pemberton.’  
 2. The said story is to consist of not less than 25,000 words, and is to make a volume of 160 pages 6 1/8 x 3 3/8 inches in size printed in Long Primer type.  
 ...story due no later than Oct. 31, 1895  
 ‘said story is to be the sole and exclusive copyright of the publishers for publication in all forms and in all countries except the United States of America...’  
 In consideration hereof -- £50  
 Corrections over an average of 10s per sheet of 32 pages – costs to be paid by author.  
 ‘7. The Author also undertakes in the event of his arranging for the publication of the story in the United States that it shall not be published there before its publication in England by the said Publishers.’ (New York Public Library)

**Sale (American rights)**                    *The Paying Guest*  
 Paying Guest, agreement (printed) between Gissing and Dodd Mead, 3 Jan 1896. 10% royalty on the retail price of each and every copy, accounts to be rendered on the first day of August and February of each year. Dodd to have sole and exclusive rights to print, publish, and sell during the full term of the copyright and all renewals. Dodd to take out US copyright in their own name.

Space left in form after copyright for any additional matters. Copies of the work to be furnished to the author at no cost, no limit mentioned. No payment due for damaged copies or for remainders sold at or near cost. No advance mentioned. (New York Public Library)

**Advance**      *The Whirlpool* (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1897; New York: Stokes, 1897)

London April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1897

Messrs. Lawrence & Bullen Ltd. Have published Mr. George Gissing's novel "The Whirlpool" on the following terms.-

- 1) Messrs. Lawrence & Bullen will pay a royalty of one shilling per copy on all copies sold in the United Kingdom, the published price to be six-shillings.
- 2) Messrs. Lawrence and Bullen agree to pay half profits on the American and Colonial sales.
- 3) The sum of one hundred and fifty guineas has been paid in advance of royalties. (New York Public Library)

**Advance**      *Human Odds and Ends: Stories and Sketches* (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1898)

**Advance**      *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* (London: Blackie, 1898; New York: Dodd, Mead, 1898)

**Advance**      *The Town Traveller* (London: Methuen, 1898; New York: Stokes, 1898)

Memorandum of an Agreement made this 10<sup>th</sup> day of May 1898 between George Gissing, Esq, hereinafter called the Author, of the one part, and Methuen & Co., of 36 Essex Street, London, W.C., Publishers, of the other part.

1. A blank is left so that 'has' or 'will' can be written in: "The Author *has* delivered a work entitled *Town Traveller* which shall extend to [space left blank] "

2. It is agreed that the said Methuen & Co. shall publish at their own risk and expense the above work.

3. The Author hereby agrees to sell and assign to the said Methuen & Co., their successors and assigns, and the said Methuen & Co. hereby agree to purchase the copyright and the sole right of publication of the above work in the British Empire ['and elsewhere' struck out and 'with the exception of Canada' written in.] for the following consideration, viz:-- [the following written in]

A Royalty of 20% on the published price of all copies sold up to 2,500.

" " " 25% " " " " " " after 2,500.

The sum of Two Hundred & Fifty (£250) shall be paid to the Author on publication on account of royalties.

[struck out entirely] In estimating the royalty on copies sold, 13 copies shall be accounted for as 12.

The said Methuen & Co. shall be at liberty to dispose of copies at special terms to America or to sell the rights of translation, and the net profits of such sale be divided between the Author and the said Methuen & Co. in proportion.

If the above book shall be included in Methuen's "Colonial Library," the royalty shall be 4d.[4d written in] per copy on copies thus sold.

The said Methuen & Co. shall be at liberty to dispose of the remainder of the Edition at "remainder prices," which shall not be subject to royalty, and the Author shall be entitled to 5 per cent. [5 per cent. is printed, not a blank] of the net proceeds of copies so sold.

In the event of the Author's corrections to the said work exceeding the of 6/[written in] per sheet of 16 pages, the amount of the excess shall be charged to the Author.

The Author will not write or publish or be concerned either directly or indirectly in writing or publishing any other work on the same subject of such kind as to injuriously affect the sale of said work, and he guarantees that the said work is in no way a violation of any copyright, and that it contains nothing of a libellous character, and he will hold harmless the said Methuen & Co. from all suits, claims, and proceedings which may be taken on the ground that the said work is such violation or contains anything libellous.

Accounts shall be made up to June 30<sup>th</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup> in each year, and shall be rendered and paid in November and May, [the following written out] to the Author's Syndicate as the duly accredited agent of the said George Gissing & the receipt of the said Author's Syndicate shall be a good & sufficient discharge of any moneys so paid as aforesaid.

[1901 revision] 17<sup>th</sup> June 1901

Clause 11. The Author hereby agrees, that, in the event of the publishers issuing the book at the published price of sixpence (6d), the Royalty due, shall be one halfpenny (1/2d) per copy on all copies sold, 13 copies to be reckoned as 12. (Lilly Library)

Coustillas' bibliography (246) gives the date as 28 February on the contract that is held by the Beinecke Library at Yale University. In the note in the *Collected Letters* (VII, 74) the editors said that the contract was then at Methuen. Gissing had been sent the contracts to sign on 7 March (Gissing *London* 485) and he returned them on 9 March (Gissing *Collected Letters* VII 74). This contract in the Lilly Library is dated 10 May, on the day that Gissing was correcting the typescript (Gissing, *London* 492). This copy is signed by Methuen. Gissing has not signed this so perhaps it is Colles or Gissing's copy. The catalogue of the Lilly exhibit calls it the original draft contract (Freeman 25).

**Advance**      *The Crown of Life* (London: Methuen, 1899; New York: Stokes, 1899)  
Pinker sold *The Crown of Life* to Methuen for £300 on advance, with a royalty of 20% on first 2500 and 25% after, with 4 pence on the colonial edition, and to Stokes for £100

**Lease and advance**   *By the Ionian Sea: Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1901; New York: Scribners, 1905). Chapman and Hall were given the option of refusal on his next novel, with £65 to be paid in September and £65 on publication. They had publication rights in Great Britain, the Colonies, and the United States for seven years from the date of publication (Gissing, *Collected Letters* VIII, 79, note 1).

**Lease and advance** *Our Friend the Charlatan* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1901; New York: Holt, 1901)

Coustillas says the agreement was for 7 years' rights but the agreement in Berg is for five, in my transcription and in the letter to Pinker from Gissing praising him for getting 5 instead of 7 years. See also the note to the letter of 30 Jan 1901 in the Letters, VIII, 135.

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT made the twenty-eighth day of January, one thousand nine hundred and one between GEORGE GISSING, care of James B. Pinker, Effingham House, Arundel Street, London; hereinafter called the Author of the one part, and Chapman & Hall, of Henrietta Street, London, hereinafter called the Publishers of the other part, whereby is it mutually agreed as follows:-

1. In consideration of the sum of Three Hundred and Fifty Pounds (£350) the Author grants the Publishers the sole right to publish in volume form in the United Kingdom and the British Colonies and Dependencies his novel at present entitled "The Coming Man".
2. The Author guarantees that he 'has power to make such grant and that the said novel contains no matter of a libellous nature, nor any beach of copyright.
3. At the expiration of five years from the date of first publication this agreement shall cease, and all rights to the book shall revert to the Author.

The Publishers shall pay one half the aforesaid sum on delivery of the complete manuscript of the novel, and the balance on publication which shall be on a day prior to May first next to be fixed by mutual arrangement. (New York Public Library)

**Lease and advance (American rights)** *Our Friend the Charlatan*

Agreement, 22 May 1901 for *Our Friend the Charlatan*, with Henry Holt, 2 copies, on printed form 'Foreign, 250 '99, IV., 23' printed on top right of form in small type. 'on the continents of America and in any possessions' struck out and 'seven years' substituted for 'the term of copyright'. Para. VIII, giving the publishers first refusal is also struck. A paragraph requiring the author to furnish an index is struck out, a royalty of 15% of the published price of copies bound in cloth is granted. (New York Public Library)

**Lease and advance** *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (London: Constable, 1903; New York: Dutton, 1903)

Typescript, in blue, for Author at Grass, dated 2 July 1902. Royalty of 20% on the published price of 'each and every' copy sold but if a colonial ed was issued the royalty would be 3d per copy. £100 advance. Book to be 6s in the first instance, unless otherwise agreed. Corrections exceed an average of 10s per sheet, cost to be deducted from royalty. Libel & copyright shield language. Constable agrees not to abridge or alter the work with consent. If remaindered and the copies not 'realise more than one third of the published price, the royalty to be paid .. shall be calculated on the actual price obtained'.

If the work became out of print, sole and exclusive rights would revert to Gissing.

Item 10: 'This agreement may be determined by either party at any time after the expiration of seven years from the date of first publication.' (New York Public Library)

Pinker had tried to sell Ryecroft to Chapman and Hall at the end of 1901 for £350 on a five year lease but they declined because they had lost money on "By the Ionian Sea

**Lease and advance** *Veranilda: A Romance* (London: Constable, 1904; New York: Dutton, 1905)

**Lease and advance** *Will Warburton: A Romance of Real Life* (London: Constable, 1905; New York: Dutton, 1905)

MEMORANDUM of AGREEMENT made this 10<sup>th</sup> day of July 1903 between GEORGE GISSING ESQ., C/o James B. Pinker, of Effingham House, Arundel Street, Strand, London, of the one part, and MESSRS. ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE & COMPANY, of 2 Whitehall Gardens, London S.W., of the other part, whereby it is agreed as follows:

1. The said Messrs. Constable & Co. shall have the sole and exclusive right of printing and publishing in volume form in the United Kingdom and the British Colonies a work at present entitled "Will Warburton" of which the said George Gissing is the author. The said Messrs. Constable & Co. shall publish the said work on a date to be fixed by mutual agreement at their own risk and expense and shall pay to the said George Gissing a royalty of Twenty per Cent (20%) on the published price of each and every copy of the work sold up to Two Thousand Five Hundred (2,500) and Twenty\_Five per Cent on all copies sold thereafter, but should a special Colonial edition be published the royalty on that edition shall be Fourpence (4d) per copy. The said Messrs. Constable & Co. shall pay to the said George Gissing on publication of the said work the sum of Three Hundred Pounds (£300) in advance and on account of the foregoing royalties.
2. The published price of the book shall in the first instance be Six-shillings (6/-) unless otherwise agreed between Author and Publishers.
3. Should the Author's corrections exceed an average cost of Ten Shillings (10/-) per sheet of thirty-two pages, such additional cost shall be deducted from royalties accruing.
4. The said George Gissing guarantees that the said work is in no way a violation of an existing copyright, or libellous, and undertakes to hold the said Messrs. Constable & Co. blameless from any claim that may be established on the ground that the said work does violate another copyright or contain libellous matter.
5. The said Messrs. Constable & Co. shall not abridge, expand, or otherwise alter the said work without the Author's consent.
6. The said George Gissing shall be entitled to receive on publication six presentation copies of the said work, and shall be entitled to



- purchase further copies for his personal use at the ordinary trade price.
7. If at any time in the opinion of the said Messrs. Constable & Co. the said work shall have ceased to have a remunerative sale, the said Messrs. Constable & Co. shall be at liberty to dispose of any copies remaining on hand as a remainder, and if such copies should not realize more than one third of the published price the royalty to be paid by the said Messrs. Constable & Co. to the Author on such copies shall be calculated on the actual price obtained.
  8. In the event of the said work being sold off at a reduced price so that the book is out of print the sole and exclusive rights of printing and publishing the work shall then revert to the said George Gissing to deal with as he may think fit.
  9. Accounts shall be made up on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of June and the 31<sup>st</sup> day of December of each year, and delivered to the said George Gissing (or his representative) and settled in cash on or before the 30<sup>th</sup> day of September and 31<sup>st</sup> day of March following.
  10. This agreement may be determined by either party at any time after the expiration of seven years from the date of first publication.
  11. The Author empowers the Publishers to pay to his Agent James B. Pinker of Effingham House, Arundel Street, Strand, W.C. all sums of money due under this agreement, and declares that the said James B. Pinker's receipt shall be good and valid discharge to all persons paying such monies. (New York Public Library)

**Table 2: Gissing's Lawrence and Bullen contracts and accounts** (New York Public Library)

On Lawrence and Bullen note paper, dated 31/12/94:

George Gissing, Esq.

"Denzil Quarrier"

In account with Lawrence & Bullen.

[Terms: Royalty of 1/ per copy on 6/ edition: half profits on Colonial & Continental sales.] [in brackets]

Sales

728/640 Royalties at 1/ per copy	£32.0.0.
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250 copies to Australia at 1/10 ½ d    half profit	£7.10.0
----------------------------------------------------	---------

50 damaged copies to Sampson Low at 1/6	
Half profit	0.16.8

[this doesn't add up at 1s 6d. but that is what it says – twice 16.8 is £1 13s 4d]

1,200 to George Bell & Sons at 10 ½ d (quires)	half profits 9.7.6
------------------------------------------------	--------------------

Half profit on Continental sales	13.2.6
----------------------------------	--------

Sales

Half profits on American sales

To June 30 1892	6.15.3
-----------------	--------

June 30 1893	0.7.5
--------------	-------

June 30 1894	0.3.9
	<hr/> £70.3.1
Stock in hand 1.1.94	
Cloth 196	
Quires (thin paper) 500	
Quires (thick paper) 50	
Moulds	
Paid on account of royalties & half profits to Mr. Gissing	
£105	
£13.2.6	
£6.11.9	

On Lawrence and Bullen note  
paper:  
31.12.94  
George Gissing, Esq.  
“The Emancipated”  
In account with Lawrence &  
Bullen.  
1,500 printed & plates  
[in two columns]  
Sales  
326/300 at 1/ = £60  
162 export at 3/6=£28.7.0  
905 quires at 10 ½ d to George  
Bell & Sons = £40.0.0  
[total] £128.7.0

Cost of Printing, paper, binding (600  
copies), fee to Messrs. Bentley, advertising  
to 31.12.94 £155.0.0  
Terms half profits [crossed out]  
Royalty at 1/ per copy from Jan 1, 95  
On hand Jan 1, 1894  
Cloth 60 copies  
Quires none  
Plates

[On Lawrence and Bullen notepaper:]

31.12.94

George Gissing, Esq.

“The Odd Women”

In account with Lawrence & Bullen.

[Terms: Royalty of 4/ per copy on 3 vol. edition: 1/ per copy on 6/ edition: half profits on Colonial & Continental sales]

Sales

331 3 vol. edition Royalties at @ 4/ = £66.4.0

563/520 1 vol. w. royalties at 1/ = £26.0.0

Half profits on Continental sales = £18.7.6

Half profits on colonial sales (1,500 to Heinemann's at 10d per copy) = £8.3.0

Half profits on American Sales

To 30/6/93 £3.12.0

To 30/6/94 £1.0.8

[total] £123.7.2

Stock in hand Jan 1, 1895

Cloth 102

3 vol. edition

8 bound copies

quire copies 354

750 copies printed

400 copies bound

331 sold

8 stock

60 gratis

1 office copy

Paid to Mr. Gissing

(on acct of royalties) £105.0.0

Half profits on continental sales £18.7.6

Additional £26.5.0

[total] £149.12.6

**Table 3: Gissing's Three-volume Novels**

<i>Title, Publisher, date</i>	<i>Pagination of Volumes</i>	<i>Reprint</i>	<i>Reprint Pagination</i>	<i>Notes</i>
<i>Workers in the Dawn A Novel.</i> Remington, March 1880.	354, 403, 442	None		Issued at 21 shillings, not at the usual guinea and a half. When Remington sent the proofs to Gissing he asked that they be cut by half to shorten each volume. Gissing refused, but compared to the volumes below, each volume was 50 to 100 pages larger. Gissing paid £125 to have 277 three-volume sets produced. Only 49 were sold, Gissing earning a total of 16s for the novel.
<i>The Unclassed: A Novel.</i> Chapman & Hall, May 1884.	307, 315, 304	Lawrence and Bullen 1895	312	400 copies were printed, the same number Chapman printed for the two-volume <i>Isabel Clarendon</i> in 1886.
<i>Demos A Story of English Socialism.</i> Smith, Elder, March 1886.	315, 296, 295	Smith, Elder; November 1886	477	750 copies were printed, 477 sold. The one-volume edition appeared 18 months after the first edition.
<i>Thyrza: A Tale.</i> Smith, Elder; August 1887.	291, 316, 299	Smith, Elder; June 1891	Revised, 490	500 copies printed, 444 sold. The late reprint was an anomaly as Smith held off printing a cheap edition until Gissing sold them the copyright.
<i>A Life's Morning.</i> Smith, Elder; 15 Nov. 1888.	315, 303, 333	Smith, Elder; Aug 1889.	348	500 copies printed, 336 sold. The reprint appeared nine months after the first edition, in a 3s 6d edition.
<i>The Nether World.</i> Smith, Elder; 3 April 1889.	291, 306, 310	Smith, Elder; December 1889.	392	500 copies printed, 372 sold. The reprint appeared seven months after the first edition.
<i>The Emancipated A Novel.</i> Bentley, 22 March 1890.	308, 308, 308	Lawrence and Bullen, 1893	Revised, 456	1,000 copies were printed, 585 sold.
<i>New Grub Street.</i> Smith, Elder; 7 April, 1891.	305, 316, 335	Smith, Elder; October 1891	469	500 copies were initially printed, followed by an additional 250 before publication. 447 were sold. The reprint appeared only five months after the first edition.

<i>Born in Exile A Novel.</i> A & C Black, 29 April 1892.	288, 271, 270	A & C Black, February or March 1893	506	500 printed. Black had their printers, Morrison and Gibb reset the three-volume edition by simply removing the extra leading and paragraph carry-overs. They paid them only £7 12s for the remake, less than a tenth the charge of an entire resetting.
<i>The Odd Women.</i> Lawrence & Bullen, 10 April 1893.	296, 330, 325	Lawrence and Bullen, February 1894.	446	750 copies of the three-volume novel were printed, and only 400 bound. Reprint issued 10 months later.
<i>In the Year of Jubilee.</i> Lawrence & Bullen, December 1894.	236, 266, 268	Lawrence and Bullen, August 1895.	443	600 copies printed. The reprint was completed by January 1895 but not released until August, eight months later.

Table 4: Smith, Elder Three-volume Novel Sales 1858-1865

Printing	Sales	Sales Per Cent	Return at 15s	Less £200 production/advertising costs (£250 on 1,000 copies)	Less £50 copyright	Less £100	Less £150	Less £250
1,000	390	39%	£293	£43	-£8	-£58	-£108	-£208
1,000	400	40%	£300	£50	£0	-£50	-£100	-£200
1,000	406	41%	£305	£55	£5	-£46	-£96	-£196
761	346	45%	£260	£60	£10	-£41	-£91	-£191
1,014	421	42%	£316	£66	£16	-£34	-£84	-£184
750	355	47%	£266	£66	£16	-£34	-£84	-£184
1,013	423	42%	£317	£67	£17	-£33	-£83	-£183
750	364	49%	£273	£73	£23	-£27	-£77	-£177
750	374	50%	£281	£81	£31	-£20	-£70	-£170
758	374	49%	£281	£81	£31	-£20	-£70	-£170
754	427	57%	£320	£120	£70	£20	-£30	-£130
750	435	58%	£326	£126	£76	£26	-£24	-£124
750	449	60%	£337	£137	£87	£37	-£13	-£113
500	453	91%	£340	£140	£90	£40	-£10	-£110
750	471	63%	£353	£153	£103	£53	£3	-£97
1,000	570	57%	£428	£178	£128	£78	£28	-£73
1,000	605	61%	£454	£204	£154	£104	£54	-£46
750	560	75%	£420	£220	£170	£120	£70	-£30
1,000	707	71%	£530	£280	£230	£180	£130	£30
1,000	810	81%	£608	£358	£308	£258	£208	£108
1,500	852	57%	£639	£389	£339	£289	£239	£139
1,250	929	74%	£697	£447	£397	£347	£297	£197
1,000	946	95%	£710	£460	£410	£360	£310	£210
1,520	992	65%	£744	£494	£444	£394	£344	£244
1,750	1595	91%	£1,196	£946	£896	£846	£796	£696
2,288	1,714	75%	£1,286	£1,036	£986	£936	£886	£786
2,026	1,833	90%	£1,375	£1,125	£1,075	£1,025	£975	£875
<b>Total Profit</b>				<b>£7,451</b>	<b>£6,101</b>	<b>£4,751</b>	<b>£3,401</b>	<b>£701</b>

Source: David Finkelstein, "The Secret": British Publishers and Mudie's Struggle for Economic Survival 1861-64'. *Publishing History* 34, 1993, p. 41-42

**Table 5: Novel Production, 1884-1904**

<b>Novels, Tales, and other Fiction</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>New Books</b>	<b>New Editions</b>
1884	408	289
1885	455	240
1886	755	214
1887	762	228
1888	929	385
1889	1,040	364
1890	881	323
1891	896	320
1892	1,147	390
1893	935	393
1894	1,315	337
1895	1,544	347
1895	1,654	525
1897	1,960	717
1898	1,758	644
1899	1,825	736
1900	1,563	546
1901	1,513	479
1902	1,743	727
1903	1,859	801
1904	1,731	817
Source: <i>Publishers' Circular</i>		



**Table 6: Bentley Production Estimates**

British Library Add. MS 6,600

Pasted into the front end leaves of this Bentley ledger are pages from a pamphlet (*Authors and Publishers*) containing a reprint of an exchange of letters between Walter Besant and George Smith. The letters originally appeared in the *Times* 24 March and 28 March 1887. Also pasted-in following is a handwritten sheet headed 'Average cost of 3 volumes' with the following table:

Edition	Paper	Printing	Binding	Cost of edition and copy
500	24. 4. – 11 <sup>5</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	70.-.- 19 <sup>5</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	30.-.- 1/ 2 <sup>5</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	125.-.- [?124.4?] 5/-/8
625	32 2 1/ - <sup>3</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	84 1/- 2/ 8 <sup>5</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	26 11 -- 1/ 2	153 12 4 10 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>8</sub>
750	38 9 -- 1/ <sup>7</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	77. 6. -- 2/ <sup>1</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	45. – 15. 1? 2 <sup>5</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	161. 10 -- 4/ 2 <sup>5</sup> / <sub>8</sub>
875	47.1.- 1/ <sup>7</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	88.2.1 2/ <sup>1</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	51.2.9 1/2	186.7.3 4/5[?0]/8
	1.-. <sup>2</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	2.4. <sup>6</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	1.2. <sup>2</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	6/7 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>8</sub> [?4/7 2/8]

**Table 7: Gissing's Short Stories**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Gissing's Short Stories</b>            (Based on Pierre Coustillas' <i>George Gissing: The Definitive Bibliography</i>. It excludes his early American stories and is not a definitive listing)</p>		
<b>Title</b>	<b>Periodical</b>	<b>Payment/Notes</b>
'Phoebe'	<i>Temple Bar</i> , LXX, March 1884, 391-406	£6 6s German translation 1891
'Letty Coe'	<i>Temple Bar</i> , XCI, August 1891. 533-44.	£6 6s American reprint 1891
'A Victim of Circumstances'	<i>Blackwood's Magazine</i> , CLIII, Jan. 1893. 69-86.	£20
'Lou and Liz'	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i> , X, Aug. 1893, 793-801	£11 11s
'The Day of Silence'	<i>National Review</i> , XII, Dec. 1893, 558-67	£13 10s (£15 less Colles' fee) American reprint 1893 French translation, 1895, £1
'Fleet-footed Hester'	<i>Illustrated London News</i> , CIII, Christmas 1893, 26-33.	£12 12s
'Muse of the Halls'	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i> , CI, Christmas 1893, 313-22	£12 12s
'Under an Umbrella'	<i>To-Day</i> , I, 6 Jan. 1894, 1-3	£5 11s 5d (3 guineas a thousand words, via Colles)
'Our Mr. Jupp'	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i> , XI, March 1894, 631-38	£12 12s French translation by Gabrielle Fleury, 1901. Gissing received payment for this and six other stories on 24 February 1894 (Gissing, <i>London</i> 330).

‘A Capitalist’	<i>National Review</i>	XXIII, April 1894, 273-84	£25 8s for this and ‘Lodger in Maze Pond’ – They were sold for £30 less Colles fee, (Gissing, <i>London</i> 328, 331)
‘The Honeymoon’	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XI, June 1884, 895-904	£12 12s One of the six stories purchased by Shorter on 15 January 1894
‘Comrades in Arms’	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XI, Sept. 1894, 1230-37	£12 12s One of the six stories purchased by Shorter on 15 January 1894
‘Pessimist of Plato Road’	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XII, Nov. 1894, 51-59	£12 12s One of the six stories purchased by Shorter on 15 January 1894
‘A Midsummer Madness’	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XII, Dec 1894, 55-63	£12 12s One of the six stories purchased by Shorter on 15 January 1894
‘The Salt of the Earth’	<i>Minister</i>	I, January 1895, 93-102	£12 12s
‘A Lodger in Maze Pond’	<i>National Review</i>	XXIV, Feb 1895, 847-62	See ‘A Capitalist’ above French translation paid £1
‘The Poet’s Portmanteau’	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XII, Feb. 1895, 3-10	£12 12s One of the six stories purchased by Shorter on 15 January 1894 American reprint 1896 but Gissing had given the American rights to Shorter
‘In Honour Bound’	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XIII, April 1895, 79-88	£12 12s One of the six stories purchased by Shorter on 15 January 1894 American reprint

			1895 but Gissing had given the American rights to Shorter
'The Friend in Need'	<i>To-Day</i>	VI, 4 May 1895, 385-86	£21 4s 7d for the entire series of 'Nobodies at Home'
'A Drug in the Market'	<i>To-Day</i>	VII, 11 May 1895, 1-2	'Nobodies at Home'
'Of Good Address'	<i>To-Day</i>	VII, 18 May 1895, 33-34	'Nobodies at Home'
'By the Kerb'	<i>To-Day</i>	VII, 25 May, 1895, 65-67	'Nobodies at Home'
'His Brother's Keeper'	<i>Chapman's Magazine</i>	I, June 1895, 146-58	£15 6s, via Colles
'A Calamity at Tooting'	<i>Minister</i>	I, June 1895, 615-24	£12 12s
'Humble Felicity'	<i>To-Day</i>	VII, 1 June 1895, 97-99	'Nobodies at Home'
'A Man of Leisure'	<i>To-Day</i>	VII, 8 June 1895, 129-131	'Nobodies at Home'
'The Tyrant's Apology'	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XIII, July 1895, 297-304	£12 12s
'Their Pretty Ways'	<i>Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper</i>	15 Sept. 1895, p.6	£4 2s
'The Fate of Humphrey Snell'	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XIV, Oct 1895, 3-10.	£12 12s
'The Medicine Man'	<i>Sketch</i>	XI, 9 Oct 1895, 588	£63 The first of the series of 20 stories in 'Human Odds and Ends' written for Shorter
'Raw Material'	<i>Sketch</i>	XI, 16 Oct. 1895, 652	'Human Odds and Ends'
'Two Collectors'	<i>Sketch</i>	XI, 23 Oct. 1895, p 708	'Human Odds and Ends'
'An Old Maid's Triumph'	<i>Sketch</i>	XII, 30 Oct 1895, 23-24	'Human Odds and Ends'
'The Invincible Curate'	<i>Sketch</i>	XII, 6 Nov 1895, 78	'Human Odds and Ends'
'The Tout of Yarmouth Bridge'	<i>Sketch</i>	XII, 13 Nov 1895, 144	'Human Odds and Ends'

‘A Well-Meaning Man’	<i>Sketch</i>	XII, 20 Nov. 1895, 205	‘Human Odds and Ends’
‘A Song of Sixpence’	<i>Sketch</i>	XII, 27 Nov. 1895, 262	‘Human Odds and Ends’
‘An Inspiration’	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XIV, Dec 1895, 268-75	£12 12s Reprinted in New Zealand 1896
‘A Profitable Weakness’	<i>Sketch</i>	XII, 4 Dec. 1895, 296	‘Human Odds and Ends’
‘The Beggar’s Nurse’	<i>Sketch</i>	XII, 11 Dec. 1895, 366	‘Human Odds and Ends’
‘Transplanted’	<i>Sketch</i>	XII, 25 Dec. 1895, 458	‘Human Odds and Ends’
‘The Foolish Virgin’	<i>Yellow Book</i>	VIII, Jan 1896, 11-38	£25 4s
‘A Parent’s Feelings’	<i>Sketch</i>	XII, 1 Jan 1896, 521	‘Human Odds and Ends’
‘Lord Dunfield’	<i>Sketch</i>	XII, 15 Jan 1896, 608	‘Human Odds and Ends’
‘The Little Woman from Lancashire’	<i>Sketch</i>	XIII, 29 Jan. 1896, 34	‘Human Odds and Ends’
‘In No Man’s Land’	<i>Sketch</i>	XIII, 12 Feb. 1896, 125	‘Human Odds and Ends’
‘At High Pressure’	<i>Sketch</i>	XIII, 19 Feb. 1896, 162	‘Human Odds and Ends’
‘A Conversion’	<i>Sketch</i>	XIII, 26 Feb. 1896, 215	‘Human Odds and Ends’ Reprinted in America
‘A Free Woman’	<i>Sketch</i>	XIII, 4 March 1896, 258	‘Human Odds and Ends’
‘A Son of the Soil’	<i>Sketch</i>	XIII, 11 March 1896, 302	‘Human Odds and Ends’ Reprinted in America
‘Out of the Fashion’	<i>Sketch</i>	XIII, 18 March 1896, 336.	‘Human Odds and Ends’
‘Our Learned Fellow-Townsmen’	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XVI, May 1896, 49-56	£12 12s Originally published in New York and Syracuse, New York in March of 1896, it did not appear in England until May as part of ‘Great Men in Little Worlds’

'Simple Simon'	<i>Idler</i>	IX, May 1896, 509-14	£5 17s 1d Reprinted in a 'bowdlerized' version in <i>Harmsworth Magazine</i> , 1900. See Coustillas, <i>George Gissing</i> 478.
'Joseph'	<i>Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper</i>	17 May 1896, 8	£9 9s.
'The Justice and the Vagabond'	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XV, June 1896, 261-67.	£12 12s
'The Firebrand'	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XV, July 1896, 353-59.	£12 12s. 'Great Men in Little Worlds'
'A Yorkshire Lass'	<i>Cosmopolis</i>	III, Aug. 1896, 309-26	£20 Reprinted in New Zealand 1897
'The Prize Lodger'	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XV, Aug 1896, 386-93	£12 12s 'Great Men in Little Worlds'
'The Schoolmaster's Vision'	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XV, Sept. 1896, 487-95	£12 12s 'Great Men in Little Worlds'
'The Light on the Tower'	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XVI, Jan 1897, 432-39	£12 12s
'The Hapless Boaster'	<i>Illustrated London News</i>	CXI, 11 Sept. 1897 349-51	£12 12s
'Spellbound'	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XVIII, Oct. 1897, 49-56	£12 12s
'A Despot on Tour'	<i>Strand Magazine</i>	XV, Jan 1898, 25-31	£26 5s, via Colles
'The Ring Finger'	<i>Cosmopolis</i>	X, May 1898,	£25 10s
'One Way of Happiness'	<i>English Illustrated Magazine</i>	XIX, June 1898, 225-32	£12 12s
'The Peace Bringer'	<i>Lady's Realm</i>	IV, Oct 1898, 634-40	£9 11s 7d, via Colles
<i>Human Odds and Ends</i>	Collected stories published by Bullen, 1898		£75 15s
'Mr. Brogden, City Clerk'	<i>Harmsworth Magazine</i>	II, Feb 1899, 39-43	£13 3s 4d Also bowdlerized (Coustillas, <i>George Gissing</i> 483)

'The Elixir'	<i>Idler</i>	XV, May 1899, 430-44	£15 2s 4d, via Colles
'Fate and the Apothecary'	<i>Literature</i>	IV, 6 May 1899, 467-69	£9 12s Various amounts for the payment exist in the 'Accounts', Diary, and Letters (Coustillas, <i>George Gissing</i> 484).
'A Poor Gentleman'	<i>Pall Mall Magazine</i>	XIX, Oct. 1899, 177-87	£14 7s 1d French translation by Gabrielle Fleury, 1900 and Polish translation 1902
'Snapshall's Youngest'	<i>Sphere</i>	I, 17 Feb. 1900, 133-35	£20
'Humplebee'	<i>Anglo-Saxon Review</i>	VI, March 1900	£31 10s
'At Nightfall'	<i>Lippincott's Monthly Magazine</i>	LXV, May 1900, 795-800	£11 11s 6d Published in America via Colles for a payment of \$65
'The House of Cobwebs'	<i>Argosy</i>	LXXI, Aug 1900, 394-409	£33 1s 6d, via Pinker
'The Scrupulous Father'	<i>Truth (New York)</i>	December 1900, 308-12	£21 3d from <i>Truth</i> and £13 13s from <i>Cornhill</i> . Reprinted in the <i>Cornhill</i> LXXXIII, February 1901, 175-87.
'A Charming Family'	<i>Illustrated London News</i>	CXVIII, 4 May 1901	£24 5s 1d, via Pinker
'A Daughter of the Lodge'	<i>Illustrated London News</i>	XCIC 17 Aug 1901	£12 8s 1d, via Pinker
'The Riding Whip'	<i>Illustrated London News</i>	CXX 22 & 29 March 1902, 419-20/457-58	£23 2s 9d, via Pinker
'Christopherson'	<i>Illustrated London News</i>	XCCI, 20 Sept. 1902, 419-21	£23 12s 6d, via Pinker
'Topham's Chance'	<i>Daily Mail</i>	9 Dec. 1903, 9	According to Coustillas' <i>George Gissing</i> the payment is not recorded

'Miss Rodney's Leisure'	<i>T.P.'s Weekly</i>	II, Christmas 1903, 1-5	The payment is not recorded
'The Pig and Whistle'	<i>Graphic</i>	LXX, Christmas 1904, 12-13	£30 14s 3d, via Pinker. Gissing was paid for the story in 1900 but it was not published until after his death (Coustillas, <i>George Gissing</i> 491)



Table 8: Comparisons of Estimated Publishing Costs and Publisher's Estimates and

## Actual Costs

## Three-volume novel: composition, paper and printing for 500 copies:

Society ( <i>Methods</i> , 46 sheets of 16 pages)	£86 14
Society ( <i>Costs</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed., 56 sheets)	£106 8s
Society ( <i>Costs</i> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> ed., 56 sheets)	£115 10s
<i>Thyrza</i>	£102 (£96 18s assuming 5% discount)
<i>A Life's Morning</i>	£81 10s 6d (£77 8s 12d assuming 5% discount)
<i>The Nether World</i> (29 sheets of 32 pages)	£85 18s 11d (£81 6s 4d assuming 5% discount)
<i>New Grub Street</i> (30¾ sheets of 32 pages)	£100 5d (£95 5d assuming 5% discount)
Bentley estimate	£94 4s
Bentley, <i>Mrs Grundy's Enemies</i>	£87 15s 11d <sup>82</sup>

## Three-volume novel: paper and printing for 1,000 copies:

Society, ( <i>Costs</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed., 56 sheets)	£137 4s
Society ( <i>Costs</i> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> ed., 56 sheets)	£151 4s
Bentley, <i>Emancipated</i>	£121 15s 2d (or £113 13s 5d with 5% discount)

## Advertising

Society ( <i>Methods/ Costs</i> )	£30
<i>Thyrza</i>	£63 12s 9d
<i>A Life's Morning</i>	£44 4s 5d
<i>The Nether World</i>	£58 5s 10d
<i>New Grub Street</i>	£60 7s 3d
Bentley, <i>Emancipated</i>	£120 15s 4d

## One-volume novel, paper and printing, 1,000 copies:

Society, 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.	£22 2s
Society, 3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.	£24 4s
<i>A Life's Morning</i>	£19 17s 2d (£18 17s 4d with 5% discount)
<i>Demos</i>	£24 2s 4d

## Advertising:

Society	£20
<i>A Life's Morning</i>	£10 9s 8d in 1889 and
£4 4s 10d in 1890.	
<i>Demos</i>	£21 9s
Sources: Society of Authors and Bentley and Smith, Elder ledgers in the British Library and the National Library of Scotland.	

<sup>82</sup> Only two volumes of the three were printed in 1883. The type must have been kept standing as another charge of £5 18s 10d for type rent to Clowes was entered in 1887. The paper was resold in 1887 for £22 8s 6d (BL ADD MS 46,599, p. 725, continued to ADD MS 46,000, p 1020.)

**Table 9: Bentley Overhead Expenses, 1890**

Bad Debts, Town Sales	£17 19s 1d
Bad Debts, Country Sales	£21 9s 6d
Bad Debts, Foreign & Colonial Sales	£3 18s 11d
Banking Charges	£6 11s 8d
Travellers' Commission	£408 6s 6d
Donations	£37 14s 6d
Fire Insurance	£76 10s
Furniture and Fittings	£13 19s 9d
House Repairs	£511 12s 3d
Stationery	£115 6s 7d
Postage, Telegraph, Stamps	£162 3s 11d
Rent	£600 2s
Rates and Taxes	£241 3s 6d
Gas, Water, Electric	£31 5s 9d
Miscellaneous, including Albion Dinner	£92 9s 2d
Packing Charges, including Carriage	£339 13s 1d
Auctioneer's Commission	£14 10s
Office Charges (coal, firewood, soap, etc)	£26 10s 8d
Petty Charges	£24 13s 5d
Law Charges	£1 11s 6d
Total non-salary expenses	£2,752 16s 9d
Salary, Readers, Auditor	£2,386 4s
Total Overhead	£5,149 9d

Figure 1: George Smith's Pro-Forma Account', *Times*, 12 March 1887, 6

F PRO FORMA ACCOUNT OF A BOOK PUBLISHED AT THE		PRICE OF 14s.			
Works	1885.		£ s. d.	Dr. £ s. d.	
		Amount of Messrs. A. B. and Co.'s account for printing 1,500 copies .. ..	106 9 4		
		Less discount allowed for cash payment, 8 per cent. .. ..	8 10 4		
		Cash paid to Messrs. A. B. and Co. on Jan. 12, 1885, by cheque on Messrs. — and Co. .. ..		97 19 0	
		Amount of Messrs. C. D. and Co.'s account for paper .. ..	60 15 9		
		Less discount allowed for cash payment, 5 per cent. .. ..	3 0 9		
		Cash paid Messrs. C. D. and Co. on Aug. 10, 1885, by cheque on Messrs. — and Co. .. ..		57 15 0	
		Amount of Messrs. E. F. and Co.'s account for binding 1,350 copies .. ..	43 4 0		
		Less discount allowed for cash payment, 6 per cent. .. ..	2 11 10		
		Cash paid Messrs. E. F. and Co. on Feb. 1, 1886, by cheque on Messrs. — and Co. .. ..		40 12 2	
		Amount paid for advertisements as per accompanying list, showing the actual cost of each advertisement (less discount where allowed) with the date of its appearance .. ..		65 4 6	
		Postages, printing trade circulars, carriage of copies to author and friends, proportion of paper and printing catalogues, and newspapers containing reviews, &c. .. ..		3 5 10	
				264 16 6	
		Allowance to cover extra discounts allowed to agents, wholesale booksellers and exporters, 5 per cent. on amount of sales .. ..	30 1 0		
		Interest on cash advanced, 5 per cent. .. ..	13 4 10		
				43 5 10	
	1886.			308 2 4	
	June 30.	Balance, half to author, carried forward .. ..	131 9 4		
		Balance, half to publisher .. ..	131 9 4		
				262 18 8	
				571 1 0	
	1888.				
	Oct. 1.	To cash, per cheque .. ..		131 9 4	
	1885.		£ s. d.	Gr. £ s. d.	
	Nov. 10.	Number of copies printed .. ..	1,500		
		Presented—			
		To public libraries .. ..	5		
		To author and friends .. ..	6		
	1886.	To editors and others .. ..	39		
	June 30.	On hand .. ..	185	235	
				1,265	
		Leaving sold as under .. ..			
		(25 copies as 24)			
		At trade sale 200 as 192 at 9s. 4d. .. ..	89 12 0		
		To trade, &c. 1,065 as 1,023 at 10s. .. ..	511 10 0		
			1,265	601 2 0	
		Less allowance to cover bad debts and sundries, 5 per cent. .. ..	30 1 0		
				571 1 0	
				£571 1 0	
	1886.				
	July 1.	By half balance, brought forward .. ..		£131 9 4	

## Archives Used

### British Library

Bentley's Publication Ledger (British Library Add. MS 6,600)  
Bentley's Summary Ledger (British Library Add MS 46,573, v. XIV, 1 April 1887 – 31 March 1896, 80)  
Mrs. Grundy letters: BM Add MS 46,599  
Gissing agreements: Add. Ms. 46,620, f. 275 and 46,623, f. 178.  
Transfer of copyright: 1892 -- Add Ms. 46624, f. 277  
Emancipated: BM Add MS 46,645, Vol. LXXXVI, 1885-26 Aug 1892  
Emancipated: BM Add MS 46,600, XLI, 1 Apr. 1888 – 31 Aug. 1893  
Summary ledgers, Add MS 46,573, v. XIV, 1 Aug 1887 – 31 Nov. 1896

### John Murray Archive, 50 Albemarle St., London (archival materials now at the National Library of Scotland)

Smith, Elder publication ledgers, translation ledger, contracts, receipts, and letters.

### Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.

Gissing mss., 1863-1958. A catalogue of this collection was published as  
Freeman, Arthur. George Gissing, 1857-1903: An Exhibition of Books, Manuscripts and Letters from the Pforzheimer Collection in the Lilly Library. Bloomington: The Lilly Library, Indiana University, 1994.

### National Library of Scotland

MS23182 Correspondence G-  
MS23184 Correspondence P-  
MS23190 – 'Cornhill Magazine Articles in Proof' 1880-1901  
MS23191 – Recollections, i-xv  
MS23192 - Recollections, xvi-xxvi

### New York Public Library, Research Libraries, Berg Collection

Gissing letters, letters from J.B. Pinker, T. Fisher Unwin and Lawrence and Bullen contracts.

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